CONTRIBUTION OF THE SOUTH TO THE HERITAGE OF INDIA

सत्यमेव जयते

THE PUBLICATIONS DIVISION
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
Government of India

May 1961 (Vaisakha 1883)

Published by the Director, Publications Division, Delhi-6 and
Printed by the Manager, Government of India Press, Faridabad

CONTENTS

	Pages
THOUGHT AND PHILOSOPHY	
Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan	7
MYTHOLOGY	
R.N. Dandekar	15
ART AND ARCHITECTURE	
Dr. Charles Fabri	22
MUSIC AND DANCE	
Rukmini Devi	28
LITERATURE	
M. Satyanarayana	34
SOCIAL CUSTOMS AND INSTITUTIONS	
Dr. K.K. Pillay	39
POLITICAL CONCEPTS AND INSTITUTIONS	
Dr. K.M. Panikkar ..	47

This booklet brings together the seven talks broadcast in the National Programme by All India Radio last year on 'Contribution of the South to the Heritage of India'. The series was part of the effort to bring about a better understanding of the way of life and traditions in different parts of the country, and to point out similarities among them, as also their common origin.

The talks were delivered by Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan, Professor of Philosophy in the University of Madras; R. N. Dandekar, Head of the Department of Sanskrit and Prakrit Languages, University of Poona; Dr. Charles Fabri, well-known art critic; Shrimati Rukmini Devi, President of the Kalakshetra International Arts Centre, Adyar, Madras; M. Satyanarayana, a scholar who has taken great interest in the propagation of Hindi in the South; Dr. K. K. Pillay, Tamil scholar and author; and Dr. K. M. Panikkar, scholar, author and administrator who has served as India's Ambassador in China, Egypt and France.

THOUGHT AND PHILOSOPHY

Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan

Quite early in the history of India a remarkable sense of cultural unity was achieved, in spite of a political pluralism. For long stretches of time there was no unitary government in the country, and principalities competed with one another for a position of dominance. The consequent political disunity was the main factor that made it possible for foreign invaders to gain an easy success, each time, in subjugating the land and domineering for a while. But despite internal dissensions and repeated external aggression, if India has preserved through the ages her religio-philosophical culture, which is her heritage, it is because of the fact that a feeling of wholeness has been constantly infused into the people by the wise ones who have appeared in all parts of the country and at all times. These great unifiers of the land rise above contingent provincialism and teach through precept and practice that India is not merely a geographical entity that lies between the Himalayas in the North and the seas in the South, but also a spiritual concept and a holy existence defying the forces of disruption and disintegration.

The poets and the philosophers, the sages and the saints, from the remotest age known to Indian history, have urged on the people to gain a sense of unity in spirit so that not only they but the entire world may be saved. The philosophical schools and the religious traditions that were consolidated and transmitted by them have this as their sole aim—the redemption of man through culture and contemplation.

In most cases it is not possible to say in which area of the country a philosophical idea arose or a religious practice made its first appearance. But it is undeniably true that in the building up of the common heritage of India every region has made its significant contribution. The South may well take pride in the fact that what it has contributed

to the enrichment of Indian philosophy and religion is as pervasive as it is deep.

Indian philosophy provides us with a varied fare. A broad distinction is made between the orthodox schools and the heterodox. Orthodoxy in this context means acceptance of the authority of the *Veda*, which is only nominal in some cases; and heterodoxy is non-acceptance of the Vedic authority, even though in some respects there may be conformity with Vedic teaching. Among the orthodox schools, those which are based on the *Veda* in the strict sense of the term are the *Mimamsa* and the *Vedanta*. The *Mimamsa* seeks to build its philosophy out of the ritual-sections of the *Veda*, whereas the *Vedanta* is inspired by the concluding portions of the *Veda* known as the *Upanisads* There are mainly two schools of the *Mimamsa*, and several of the *Vedanta* Of the orthodox schools, there are quite a few which, while owing allegiance to the *Veda*, depend more, for their teachings, on the class of sacred books called the *Agamas*. The two principal heterodox schools are the *Jaina* and the *Bauddha*. Each one of these varieties of Indian philosophy has flourished in the South which, if not the home of some of them, has helped in the elaboration and development of all the traditions.

For the evolution of the *Mimamsa* philosophy, the South has done a great deal. Jaimini, the author of the basic *sutras* of this system, makes out that to teach religious duty is the purport of the *Veda*. Sabara wrote a commentary on Jaimini's *sutras* which is interpreted in two different ways by two outstanding scholars generally believed to be South Indians. Kumarila Bhatta who was an elder contemporary of Sankara, is regarded as an Andhra by birth; and Prabhakara who founded the rival school was, according to tradition, a native of north Travancore and a pupil of Kumarila. The story of the pupil excelling the teacher is not uncommon, especially in the South. There are important differences between the Bhatta and the Prabhakara versions of the *Mimamsa* philosophy. In the hands of Vedantic teachers such as Vedanta Desika, the atheistic *Mimamsa* got transformed into theistic *Mimamsa*. Sayana, whose commentary

on the *Veda* is well known, and his brother Madhva, who wrote a work explaining the *Mimamsa* rules, were scholars patronised by the founders of the Vijayanagar kingdom.

In the ceremonies conducted at the temples of the South and in the household rites also the chanting of the Vedic *mantras* and the performance of Vedic ritual play a great role. It is universally recognised that the correct intonation of the Vedic texts has been best preserved in the South.

Great as has been the contribution of the South to the development of *Mimamsa* philosophy and the cultivation of ritual practice including Vedic recitation, much greater has been its distinction in the field of *Vedanta*. The very mention of *Vedanta* makes one think of Sankara who was born at Kaladi in Kerala and whose date, according to many scholars, is 788–820 A.D.

The particular form of *Vedanta* taught by Sankara is known as *Advaita,* and is as old as the *Upanisads.* Sankara expounds his philosophy of the non-dual Absolute in his commentaries on the principal *Upanisads,* the *Brahma-sutras* of Badarayana, and the *Bhagavad Gita,* as also in independent manuals such as the *Upadesasahasri* and the *Vivekacudamani.* The quintessence of his philosophy is that the ultimate spirit which is referred to in the *Upanisads* as *Brahman* or *Atman* is the sole and whole reality, that the world of multiplicity is an illusory appearance, and that the so-called individual soul is no other than the absolute spirit.

There were Vedantins, and even Advaitins, before Sankara. One of them bore the name Dramida or Dravidacarya, which is indicative of his Southern origin. He is referred to with reverence both by Sankara, and Ramanuja, who came after him and systematised the school of *Vedanta* called *Visistadvaita.* Another great pre-Sankara Advaitin was Gaudapada whom tradition regards as Sankara's grand-preceptor. But it was Sankara who, for the first time, expounded *Advaita* in a comprehensive and clear manner. His commentaries on the three basic texts of *Vedanta,* namely, the *Upanisads,* the *Sutra,* and the *Gita,* have justly been praised for their lucidity and depth. Although many commentaries were composed before his

time, none of them have survived. And, those Vedantins who came after him have followed, consciously or unconsciously, the model set by him. It will be of interest to note that Suresvara, one of the immediate disciples of Sankara, after quoting verses from Gaudapada and Sankara embodying the same idea, refers to his own teacher not by name but as Dravida, that is, one who hailed from the Southern country.

Eminent as Sankara was as a philosopher, sage and saint, he was also an efficient organiser of Hindu society and a dauntless reformer of Hindu practices. The few years that he chose to live on earth were dedicated to ceaseless service of India. He walked from end to end more than once, exhorting the people to turn to clean and exalted ways of life. He purged Hinduism of excrescences that had crept in, established the faiths in their purity, cleansed the temples of the evils that had come to be associated with them and made them serve the purposes for which they were intended, and set up at the cardinal points of the country monastic institutions which would safeguard the spiritual interests of the race. Of these institutions, five are the most important. Except the one at Badari in the Himalayas, the other four are in the peninsular part of India, at Puri, Dwaraka, Sringeri and Kanchi. Any one travelling in India will see even today the salutary effects of the great revolution that Sankara wrought in the country from Kashmir to Kanya Kumari.

Besides *Advaita*, the two other well-known schools of *Vedanta* are *Visistadvaita* and *Dvaita*, associated, respectively, with the names of Ramanuja and Madhva, who were also South Indians.

The place where Ramanuja was born, Sriperumbudur, is not far from Madras. Coming about two centuries after Sankara, Ramanuja rejected the *Advaita* view of *Brahman* as attributeless (*Nirguna*) and the doctrine of *Maya*. According to him, *Brahman* is related to the world of the living and the non-living as soul to body. The individual souls (*jivas*) and matter (*acit*) constitute the qualification (*visesana*) of *Brahman* which, therefore, is the qualified

(*visista*) Absolute. Hence, Ramanuja's *Vedanta* is called *Visistadvaita.* Following the *Pancaratra,* the teachings of the Vaisnava saints of the South known as Alvars, and his own predecessors, Nathamuni and Alavandar, Ramanuja identified *Brahman* with Visnu-Narayana. For the cult of *bhakti,* he gave a metaphysical basis. Many a *bhakti* movement of the North received inspiration from his teachings.

Madhva, born towards the end of the twelfth century near Udipi, was even more opposed to Sankara than Ramanuja. He interpreted *Vedanta* as a radical pluralism (*atyanta-bheda-veda*). According to his view, which is called *Dvaita,* God, matter, and souls are absolutely different from one another; and the utmost that a soul may hope to gain is the status of servitude to God. Like Ramanuja, Madhva too regards Visnu as the supreme God. Profoundly influenced by the *Bhagavata-Purana,* which is believed to have been composed somewhere in South India, Madhva propagated the cult of Krishna-worship. The Chaitanya movement of Bengal in its later phase elected to follow the pluralistic philosophy of Madhva.

Among the other Vaisnava schools of philosophy, mention may be made of two whose founders were South Indians. *Dvaitadvaita* is the name of the system of *Vedanta* founded by Nimbarka of the eleventh century, a Telugu by birth, who made Brindavan in the North his place of residence. The other Vaisnava school is *Buddhadvaita* which is associated with the name of Vallabha of the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries, who was a Telugu living at Banaras, and who, like Nimbarka, started another *Karama* cult.

Parallel to the Vaisnava schools of philosophy, there are in South India equally powerful schools of Saivism. The most important of these are *Saivasiddhanta, Virasaivism* and *Sivadvaita.* Just as there are *Vaisnava Agamas* for Vaisnavism, there are *Saiva Agamas* for Saivism.

Saivasiddhanta, which is the Tamil school, depends for its doctrines not only on the *Agamas* but also on the teachings of the Saiva saints of the South known as Nayanars. The basic text of the school is the *Siva-Jnanabodham* written by Meykondar of the thirteenth century. The central doctrine

of *Saivasiddhanta* is that the three categories, namely, God (*pati*), soul (*pasu*) and the bonds (*pasa*) consisting of *anava, karma* and *maya,* are all real. God is Siva, the highest reality: the individual soul is of the same essence as Siva but not identical therewith. This, declares Saiva-siddhants, is the true *advaita*: it is non-separateness from God and not non-difference.

Virasaivism, the second Saiva school we shall consider, traces its origin to hoary antiquity, and was made popular in the Kannada area in the twelfth century by Basava, the prime minister of Bijjala, King of Kalyani. In course of time, it spread to Andhra and Tamilnad. The term '*vira-saivism*' means the Saivism of the stalwarts or heroic Saivism. It is also called *Lingavata* on account of the fact that its followers wear a *linga* on their person. Besides the *Vedas, Agamas* and *Puranas,* the Virasaivas accepted the authority of the Tamil Saiva saints, whom they refer to as ancients, and the sayings called *vacanas* of the Kannada mystics. The *Virasaiva* philosophy is technically known as *Sakti-Visistadvaita,* a term which means that the non-duality of God is qualified by His power (*sakti*).

The school of *Sivadvaita* founded by Srikantha, who was probably a contemporary of Ramanuja, comes very close to the *Advaita* of Sankara. Appayya Dikshita, who lived in the sixteenth century, sought to reconcile the two systems in his many works on Saivism and *Advaita.* He says that although Srikantha in certain passages of his commentary on the *Brahma-sutras* appears to teach *Siva-Visistadvaita* for the benefit of dull-witted people, the essence of his philosophy is *Advaita.*

Turning to the heterodox systems of thought, Jainism and Buddhism, we may note that they had a considerable following for a time in the South, and that their subsequent decline was due to reform movement in Hindusim and the teachings of the Saiva and Vaisnava saints. Jain and Buddhist writers have enriched the literatures of the Southern languages by their writings. Tiruvalluvar, author of the *Tirukkural* which contains a comprehensive code of ethics and has become a world classic, is claimed as their own by

Jainas and Bauddhas, and Saivas and Vaisnavas alike. In the *Manimekhalai* which is a Bauddha poem in Tamil by Sattanar, the heroine is advised to study in Kanchi the philosophical systems of the *Veda, Saiva, Vaisnava, Ajivika, Jaina, Sankhya, Vaisesika,* and *Lokayata.* Kanchi has had the unique distinction of producing Dignaga, the distinguished Bauddha logician, and of sending Dharmapala to Nalanda as its head in the sixth century. The Jainas have had great influence in Karnataka; there are several Jaina works in Kannada, many of which have for their theme the lives of Tirthankaras and other Jaina saints. Madurai was the stronghold of Jainism for a while: we hear of the organisation, in that city, of a new *Sangha* in A.D. 470 by Vajranandin.

Philosophy in India is closely associated with religion. The teachers of philosophy are considered to be the leaders of religion as well. Every one of the philosophers mentioned so far was an accredited religious leader also. Reference has already been made to the Saiva and the Vaisnava saints of the South. Sixtythree are the canonised saints of Southern Saivism: they are significantly called Nayanars, meaning 'leaders'. The most important of them are the four great bards, Jnanasambandhar, Appar, Sundarar and Manikkavacakar. All the four were inspired poets who flooded the country with a great wave of devotion and thus created in the minds of people a disposition for spiritual life. *Alvars,* the Vaisnava saints, twelve in number, were 'divers into divinity' as their name indicates. The greatest of them, Nammalvar, was a born *yogi.* His poetical work, the *Tiruvaymoli* has been described by Vedanta Desika as the Dravida-*Upanisad.*

Virasaivism in Karnataka produced a number of mystics who expounded the doctrine in a popular and arresting manner. There were over two hundred of them including women with Mahadeviyakka as their head. Their writings are called by the collective name *vacana-sastra.* The one burden of these writings is to call men back from their career of sin and make them turn to Siva for refuge. Vaisnavism in the Kannada area inspired the movement of Hari-

dasas, the greatest of whom was Purandaradasa, saint and composer of great merit. His *padas* in simple Kannada pour forth in an abundant measure God-devotion and God-love. A similar movement took place in Maharashtra: with it are associated the names of Jnanadev, Namdev, Ekanath, Tukaram and Ramdas. A distinct school of mysticism known as the *Siddha* has been current in the South. Tirumular, whose *Tirumantiram* constitutes one of the canonical texts of Southern Saivism, was a great *Siddha*. A special doctrine of the *Siddha* school is that the physical body may be immortalised. This school had its counterpart in the cult of the *Natha yogis* of the North.

In recent centuries, and even in our own time, the South has produced eminent sages and saints: to mention but a few of them, Tayamanavar, Sadasiva Brahman, Tyagaraja, Ramalinga Swami, Narayana Guru, and Ramana Maharshi. What a recent Western writer says about the last mentioned sage may be said about the others also: in them 'one meets again ancient and eternal India'.

MYTHOLOGY

R. N. DANDEKAR

It was once generally believed that, in the matter of spiritual culture, South India was largely, if not exclusively, indebted to the North. A critical study of the cultural history of ancient India would, however, show that the advent of the Aryans in this country and their subsequent victorious progress ultimately resulted not so much in the Aryanisation of India as in the Indianisation of the Aryans.

Let me illustrate this point with reference to religion. Broadly speaking, the religion of the Aryans, which is popularly known as Brahmanism or Vedic religion, developed mainly through three distinct stages—the cosmic-heroic worship of the *Samhitas,* the complex ritualism of the *Brahmanas,* and the mystic idealism of the *Upanisads.* Obviously such a religion was not expected to satisfy the religious fervour of the people at large.

Though, therefore, in its first flush, this hieratic Brahmanism seemed to dominate the religious scene of Northern India, its influence soon began to wane. The period immediately following the principal *Upanisads,* accordingly, saw the rise of new religious belief and practices. Actually, these beliefs and practices were by no means new. They had already been in existence in this country to a lesser or greater extent. But, in course of time, they came to be suppressed by the religious ideology of the victorious Aryans. Indeed, it is this latter ideology which must be characterised as new and exotic.

As I have said, the Vedic religion overwhelmed the earlier religions, but only temporarily. In the post-Upanisadic period, several non-Vedic religious movements began to make their influence felt. These were, for instance, Buddhism and Jainism. The attitude of these two religions was avowedly anti-Vedic. For my present purpose, I need not dilate upon their later history. I may only say that it completely

belied their early promise. One of them disappeared, almost entirely, from the land of its birth, while the other persisted but with a very limited currency.

It is still another religious movement, which also, in a sense, arose by way of a reaction against the hieratic Brahmanism, that is relevant to our purpose. The sponsors of that movement must be said to have taken an essentially practical and realistic view of things. They realised that the gods of the official Vedic pantheon, like Varuna and Indra, the very complicated system of Brahmanic sacrifice, and the highly esoteric teachings of the *Upanisads* had almost ceased to appeal to the popular imagination, and that, therefore, people were again turning back to the various pre-Vedic religious cults. They also realised that the *Veda* still continued to have a sufficiently strong hold on certain influential classes, and that an anti-Vedic attitude by itself did not generally find favour with the people.

They, therefore, sought to bring together within a common fold the various popular cults, which were non-Vedic but not necessarily anti-Vedic in origin and character and which, in spite of Brahmanism, still commanded a large following among the masses. While doing so, they took care to see that this new popular religion did not divorce itself completely from the *Veda*. On the contrary, this new religion openly accepted allegiance to the *Veda*. And though, in actual practice, this allegiance proved to be just nominal, it definitely served to hold together the many, originally unrelated popular cults. This is how popular Hinduism, which symbolises the religious culture of India even today, originated.

In course of time, even the staunch votaries of Brahmanism, who were making a last bid to save their Aryan heritage against the onslaught of the anti-Vedic crusaders, saw in the rise of Hinduism a welcome opportunity to preserve at least some vestige of it. If, however, one compared Brahmanism and Hinduism, he would find that in the mythology and religious practices of the latter there were more indigenous Indian elements than Aryan ones. And not a few of these were derived from South India.

Perhaps the greatest gift of South India to Hinduism is God Siva. The primitive religion of South India may be described as a form of Shamanism, in which the simple folk indulged in ecstatic religious practices and sought to propitiate their god mainly with offerings of blood. Presumably, on account of such offerings of blood, this god came to be called Siva, which word in proto-Dravidian meant 'red'. Apart from the rude icons reddened with blood, this god of the proto-Dravidians seems to have been represented also through two other symbols—the *linga* or the phallus, and the bull.

There is, indeed, ample evidence to show that, long before the advent of the Aryans, the cult of the popular proto-Indian god had spread far and wide in this country—different aspects of his religion being specially emphasised in different regions. He was, for instance, celebrated as Siva in the South, as Pasupati in the Indus Valley, as Bhava by the Bahikas and as Sarva by the Easterners.

Some of the religious practices associated with Siva were obviously such as clearly offended the susceptibilities of the hieratic poet-priests of the *Veda*. At the same time, the popular pressure in their favour was so great that those poet-priests could not help making room for that god in their pantheon. The Vedic Rudra represents, both in name and character, an Aryanised version of the proto-Indian Siva.

It will, however, be seen that in their mythology and ritual the Vedic poet-priests deliberately tried to isolate that god. But, with the rise of popular Hinduism, this recalcitrance was completely overcome, and Siva—his non-Aryan name now being understood in its Aryan sense of 'benevolent', but most of the other traits of his original character and cult being preserved intact—came to the conceded a very prominent place among the Hindu gods. As a natural consequence of this, several religious practices associated with the cult of Siva, such as *puja, bali* and *yoga,* which, incidentally, were essentially non-Vedic in origin and character, came to be introduced into Hinduism, and Hindu mythology came to be enriched by many a legend celebrating Siva and other ancillary divinities.

The Aryanisation of South India may be said to have begun round about 1000 B.C. and been completed before the time of Asoka. Surely, it was this historical process which gave rise to the cycle of Agastya-legends in Hindu mythology. Even Tamil literature has its own traditions about Agastya. According to one such tradition, a large concourse of gods and sages had assembled in the Himalayas to attend the wedding of Siva and Parvati. The sheer weight of this august assembly caused the earth to sink down towards the north, thereby jeopardising all creation. At that juncture, the gods and the sages hit upon the idea of sending Agastya to the South in order to restore the disturbed balance of the earth. Before Agastya proceeded on this mission of deliverance, he went to the river Ganga and obtained from her the river Kaveri. He also married Lopamudra and secured Jamadagni's son Trnadhumagni as his pupil. He further persuaded eighteen members of the Vrsni family of Dwaraka and eighteen crores of Velir and Aruvalar to accompany him to the South. With this large following he came down the Vindhyas, cut down the forests, set up, with the help of Kaveri, extensive colonies in what was originally a wilderness, and finally made his own home in the hill of Podiyil in the southern part of the Western Ghats.

Another tradition makes Agastya's pupil Trnadhumagni, who had in the meantime assumed the name of Tolkappiyar, the author of the oldest Tamil grammar *Tolkappiyam.* Still another speaks of Agastya's having been the *Kulaguru* (family preceptor) of the first Pandya ruler, who incidentally, claimed to be a descendant of Siva. All these Tamil traditions evidently confirm and supplement the history underlying the epic legends.

The so-called Aryanisation of South India was in several respects quite unlike the Aryanisation of North India. Firstly, this movement was of the nature of Hinduisation rather than of Aryanisation. For, the most tangible result of it was the acceptance by the South Indians not of Aryan theology but of Hindu sociology as reflected in the caste system. Secondly, this movement does not seem to have evoked much opposition. On the contrary there is evidence

to show that the changes brought by it were welcomed by the Dravidians with alacrity. And thirdly, the incursions from the North were not so violent as to root out the languages and the peculiar religious culture of the South.

Indeed, this contact between the North and the South involved much give and take—perhaps more 'give' than 'take' on the side of the Dravidians. For instance, the *Suddha-bhakti* or the way of unmixed personal devotion to God, is believed to have been the special contribution of South India to Indian religious thought. According to the *Padmapurana, bhakti* originated in the Dravida country, and passed from there into the Maratha country, ultimately reaching the Gangetic doab round Mathura.

The *thevarams* and the *prabandhams* of the Tamil saints, read with the *Bhagavata-Purana,* which speaks of the very large number of *bhaktas* in the Dravida country, would also seem to confirm this tradition. Four gods are specially mentioned in this connection, namely, the 'red one with blue throat' or Siva, the 'white one of the ploughshare and the palmyra flag' or Baladeva, the 'blue one with the eagle flag' or Krishna, and 'the rider on the elephant with the peacock-flag' or Subrahmanya. The manner in which these gods are referred to by Nakkirar in his poem suggests their having been regarded as peculiarly Tamil gods.

Co-existence was the watch-word of the religious life of the Hinduised South India. Vedic ritual was practised side by side with the elaborate *puja* of the Hindu gods, and even the Buddhists and the Jainas freely followed their religious practices. But the religion, which could be characterised as specifically South Indian, concerned the village-gods of those people. In spite of the influences from the North—whether Brahmanic or Hindu—more than 80 per cent of the population continued to worship their local divinities.

In every village in South India may be seen even today a shrine or a symbol of its own *grama-devata,* who is propitiated periodically and with community worship, in order to avert pestilence, famine or any other calamity befalling man or beast. This religion does not boast of any system of philosophy as its foundation, nor of any uniform ritual as

its superstructure. But it certainly has its own mythology. A major part of this mythology is preserved in the form of confused legends by the families of Asadis, and revolves round the origin and functions of the various *grama-devatas*.

One of such legends tells of Minaciamman of Madurai who, assuming the form of Durga, slew the irreligious Pandya king. Another legend describes the birth of Brahma, Visnu and Siva out of the egg laid by the village-goddess Ammavaru or Ankamma, their rise to power and consequent neglect of the worship of Ammavaru, and finally their subjugation by Ammavaru. This legend obviously reflects the changing fortunes of the *grama-devatas* in relation to the gods of the Hindu pantheon.

The most common village-deity in South India is, of course, Mariamma. Many stories are current about the origin of this goddess. One of them runs as follows : The wife of the sage Jamadagni and mother of Parasurama was so chaste that she could carry water in a mass without any vessel, and her wet cloth would fly up into the air and remain there till it was dry. One day, however, there occurred an unconscious lapse on her part, and she lost all that power. Her husband was enraged, and ordered his son Parasurama to take her into the wilderness and cut off her head. So, the son took his mother away; but as they reached the appointed place, a Pariah woman ran forward and embraced Jamadagni's wife in her arms in order to save her. Greatly perplexed but still obedient, Parasurama cut off the heads of both of them and went back to his father in great sorrow. The father, pleased at his son's conduct, offered him a boon. Thereupon, Parsurama asked that his mother might be restored to life. Jamadagni granted the boon and gave him some water in a vessel and a cane, telling him to put his mother's head on her body, sprinkle the water on her, and tap her with the cane. In his eager haste, however, Parasurama put his mother's head on the body of the Pariah woman, and the latter's head on his mother's body, and restored them both to life. The woman with the Brahmana head and Pariah body was afterwards worshipped as Mariamma; while the woman with the Pariah head and the Brahmana body came to be worshipped as Vellamma.

May this legend not be said also to epitomise, in a sense, the genesis of the entire body of Ḥindu mythology, which consists mainly of two kinds of myths—those having indigenous Indian basis and Brahmanic superstructure, and those having Brahmanic basis and indigenous Indian superstructure ?

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

DR. CHARLES FABRI

For something like forty years, a small body of scholars have been trying to impress upon the world that Indian culture was composite, and that the nineteenth century conception of the so-called 'Aryan' civilisation was false. Among these scholars, one of the foremost was my late lamented *guru,* Sylvain Levi, and my one-time teacher in Paris, Prof. Przilusky. Their attack concentrated on letters and the written word; for, the general opinion, then accepted, was that Sanskrit alone gave a key to the whole of Indian culture, and that the northern invaders, usually referred to as the 'Aryans', brought all civilisation to a barbarous land of dark-skinned pre-Aryan nomads. In brief, there was no culture worth the name before the arrival of the Indo-Aryans in India.

The discoveries at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa shook the foundations of this belief to a moderate degree. It became evident that long before the arrival of the horse-riding northerners there were highly organised and splendidly built brick cities in a vast area of India, in which a pre-Aryan people of remarkable skill and knowledge lived. That they were some kind of Dravidian people, predecessors of the present inhabitants of South India, cannot be proved with certainty; but the cumulative evidence is so strong that few serious scholars now doubt the Dravidian character of the pre-Aryan city-dwellers of Western India. After all, there is a good deal of reference to their cities in the most ancient writings of the Aryans, the *Rig Veda.*

And yet, it is still difficult to convince the world that the contribution of South India to this composite culture was enormous. It has been said that it is far more easy to convince the world of a false notion than to correct it. This certainly is the case with art history. Open any history of Indian art, and one will find it full of a copious treatment

of Northern Indian art, and no more than a passing reference to the South.

This lop-sided view has been helped by the curious fact that British and other foreign archaeologists, who built up in the nineteenth and early twentieth century the background knowledge of Indian art through their excavations, have concentrated their energies on excavating sites in Northern India, with only superficial diggings south of the Vindhya mountains.

This may have been due to the Europeans' preference for the better climate of the North; or because the capital cities, Calcutta, Delhi and Simla, where the Government sat, were all in the North. Be that as it may, we have examples such as the sixteen years' work at Taxila, or the eight solid years of excavation at Mohenjo-daro, against which there is nothing remotely comparable on South Indian sites. The 'back-log', to put it that way, is still vast. Enormous amount of work is left undone in South India, and the archaeologists would have to do many years of concentrated work there before the finds can be compared, in any way, with those of the northern areas.

I do not know of any art history of India that gives due credit to the magnificent contribution of South Indian artists to the sum-total of Indian art history.

To start with the earliest period, that of the Mauryan dynasty, I find that all the emphasis is laid on the earliest sculptures excavated in and around Mathura. Of this archaic period of sculpture, our art histories tell us, the very first carved images are those from Parkham—a large *yaksha* and the *yakshi* (or dryad) from Besnagar. Other objects of the same style, rigid, clumsy, lifeless, have been found near Patna and Mathura, some of which precede the earliest carvings at Bharhut, another northern Indian monument of utmost importance to the early history of Indian sculpture and architecture.

Yet, not only has Bharhut been built under the aegis of a South Indian dynasty, but long before that, indeed probably more than a hundred years before Bharhut, South Indian sculptors were among the earliest pioneers of Indian

stone carving. It is, of course, widely known and proved that the empire of Asoka the Great extended deep into the South. Much less well-accepted is the fact, easily proved by a visit to the Government Museum, Madras, that among the finds made in the early Buddhist sites of Andhra, notably at Amaravati and around Visakhapatnam, there are statues that must be recognised as undoubtedly among the earliest ever made in stone by Indian Buddhist sculptors.

In particular, I refer to a *yaksha* image now in the Madras Museum that may well prove to be the earliest extant stone carving known in India. This is an archaic figure, strongly reminiscent of the more northern *yaksha* and *yakshi* images, but in many ways even more primitive in execution. Nothing quite as archaic can be found at Bharhut, and the famous and splendid Parkham *yaksha* statue seems to be a good generation later, more freely carved, with a greater plastic understanding.

Not only are there early Buddhist carvings going back to the second century B.C. in South India, hardly ever mentioned in art histories, but with the rise of the Ikshvaku dynasty there follows a period, roughly the first to the fourth centuries A.D., when all the most important and the most exquisite sculptural remains, now in our hands, are located in the Southern regions. Amaravati is a wonder in itself; Nagarjunakonda, not far away, also in the Andhra country, has yielded in the last few years evidence of an intense artistic activity quite unmatched in North India.

This important period is characterised by the transition from the archaic or primitive stage towards the perfection of the classic era. And whilst in the North there is a considerable gap between the second and the fourth century, with the exception of the Greco-Buddhist art of Gandhara, in South India we have an unbroken succession of sculptural remains, in which the gradual discovery of freely moving figures, bold action and correct proportions can be studied with growing wonder. The aesthetic sensibility of the Andhra sculptor is, in fact, a matter for constant wonder. Long before the northerner could move his human figures with anything like ease, the stone-carvers of Amaravati and

Nagarjunakonda astonish the spectator with the superbly flowing lines, the exquisite grace of elongated, elegant women, the masculine agility of their men and compositions full of life and verve. Indeed it would not be incorrect to say that true classical art, much of which has disappeared in Northern India, is now best represented in the later phases of Nagarjunakonda.

And now that the art of Nagarjunakonda has been found to last well into the fourth century at least, it is easier to see that the rock-cut shrines at Mamallapuram, near Madras, are the direct continuation of this art. These so-called 'Rathas of Mahabalipuram' have been, quite incorrectly, dated to 625 A.D. and later. This is not the place and time to show evidence that this dating is entirely impossible; elsewhere, I give proof that the world-famous Mamallapuram shrines are typical examples of classic art, and belong to the period fourth to the fifth centuries A.D. Their exquisite balance, the restrained classical poses of their sculptures, the superb mastery of form, the chaste use of space in composition—all these and many more declare them as among the finest flowers of classical Indian sculpture, paralleled only by the contemporary work of the Gupta Empire in the North. And whilst the 'Rathas' belong to this classical style, the surrounding caves and the large rock-face carving called 'Arjuna's Penance' show all the subsequent styles, from mannerism to complete baroque.

Not only were the Dravidian masters pioneers in sculpture and architecture, but they were also the greatest painters in Indian art history. Although there are isolated examples of early paintings in two or three places in Northern India, notably at Sita Bhanji, in a cave, the vast mass of surviving Indian painting of antiquity is in the Deccan. At Ajanta, in Andhra country, mural painting lasted a full thousand years, from the second century B.C. to the eighth century A.D. at least; and the superb quality of even the earliest wall paintings, in Caves IX and X at Ajanta, has been a matter for wonder to all students of art.

These go back to the period immediately following that of Emperor Asoka, and the later paintings at Ajanta range

from the classical fourth and fifth centuries A.D. to the more delicate, decorative and exaggerated formalism of the baroque. And whilst speaking of painting, I may mention here that there is an almost uninterrupted history of South Indian painting, through the murals of the Bagh Caves, the Jaina wall paintings at Sittanavasal, the temple paintings at Tanjore, the palaces at Padmanabhapuram and Krishnapuram in Kerala, to the nineteenth century murals in the Mattanchari palace at Cochin.

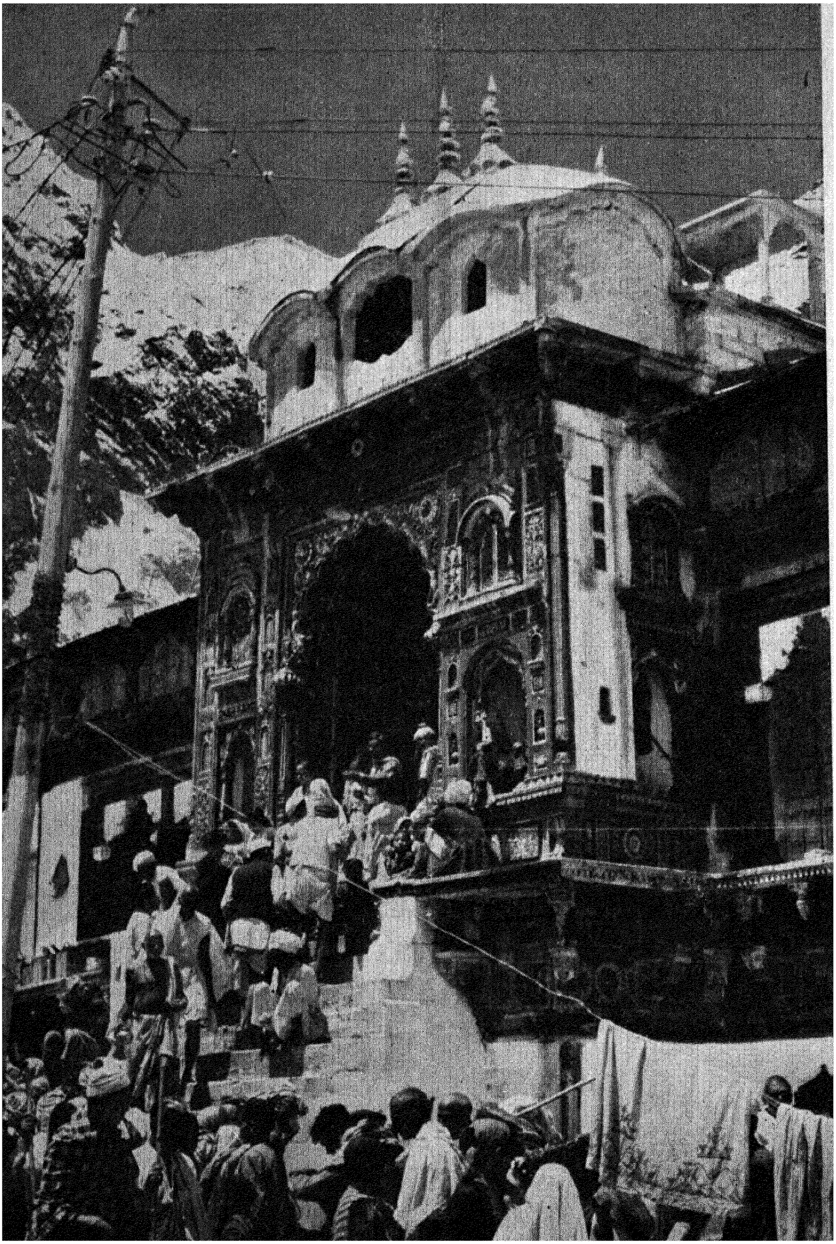
Cave architecture is no less distinguished in the South. There are old caves around Visakhapatnam, followed by a flourishing period during the Pallava dynasty, of which the most outstanding examples are, perhaps, those at Tiruchirappalli. The cave temples and monasteries of Ellura and Ajanta are well known enough, though much less is heard of the Aurangabad caves that contain some of the most strikingly beautiful rock-out sculpture of the baroque times. Around Bombay, once part of the southern empires, there are over 150 caves, and they include the early Buddhist caves of Bhaja, Karle and Nasik as well as the later examples at Kanheri.

Volumes could be written of Dravidian temple architecture and only a few hints are necessary of the many such neglected treasures that the South holds. For, although the vast and splendid temple complexes of Tanjore, Madurai, Tiruchirappalli, Chidambaram, the later masterpieces of the Hoysalas at Somanathapura, Belur and Halebid are widely known, little is heard of the hundred temples of Aihole where I have been fortunate enough to discover the earliest structural temple so far known in India or of the superb works at nearby Badami and Pattadakal—places which ought to be included in every artistic itinerary in India, but extremely difficult of access.

But apart from sculpture, painting and architecture, all of which I have touched upon only in a cursory manner, there is the vast body of bronzes—an art in which South India vastly excelled. The earliest bronzes go back well into Buddhist times, and are far more numerous than is usually surmised by the less well-informed; and during the period

Shiva-Pasupati
Mohenjo-daro

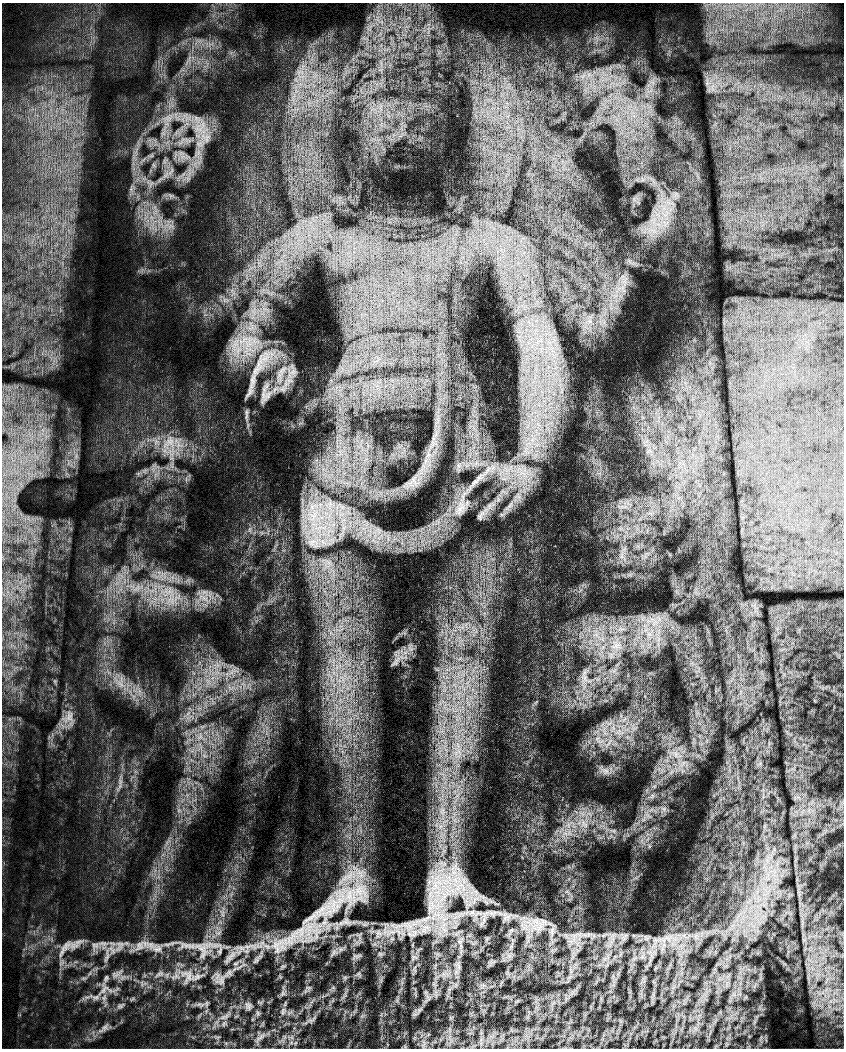
An image of
Shankaracharya



The temple of Badrinath

Ramanujacharya

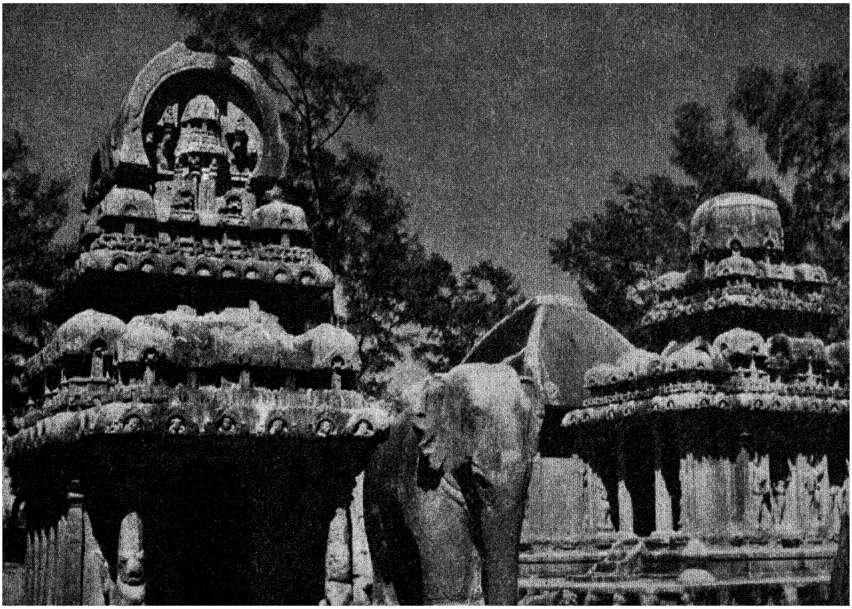
A carving from Amaravati, representing a stupa

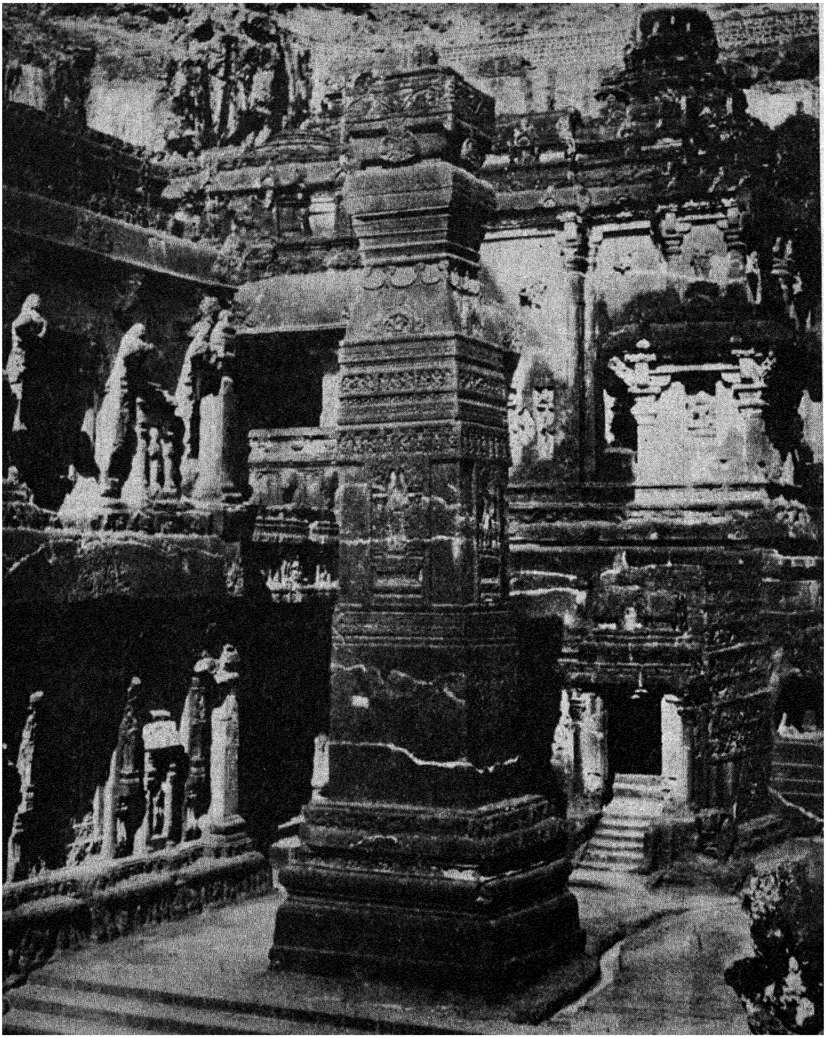


A specimen of stone carving, Badami

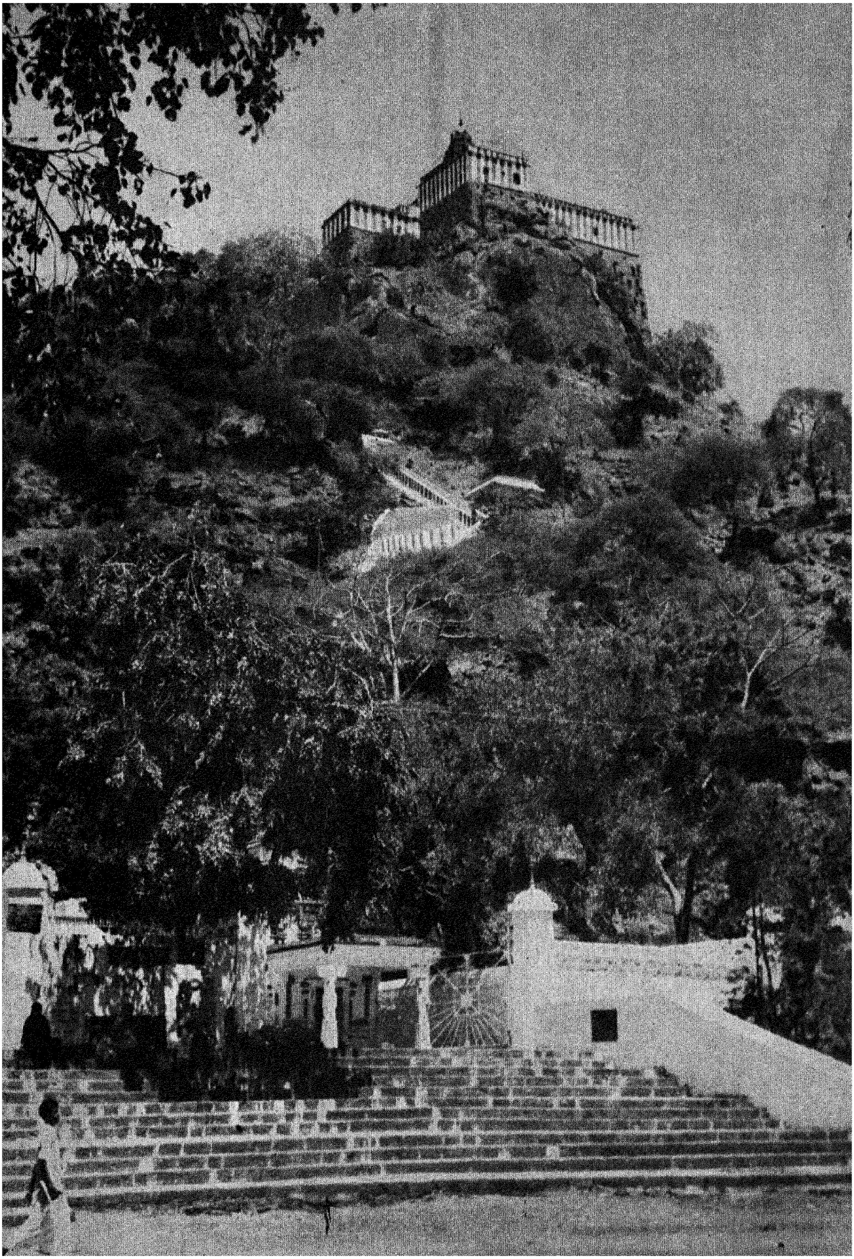
An Ajanta wall painting

'Rathas' of Mahabalipuram

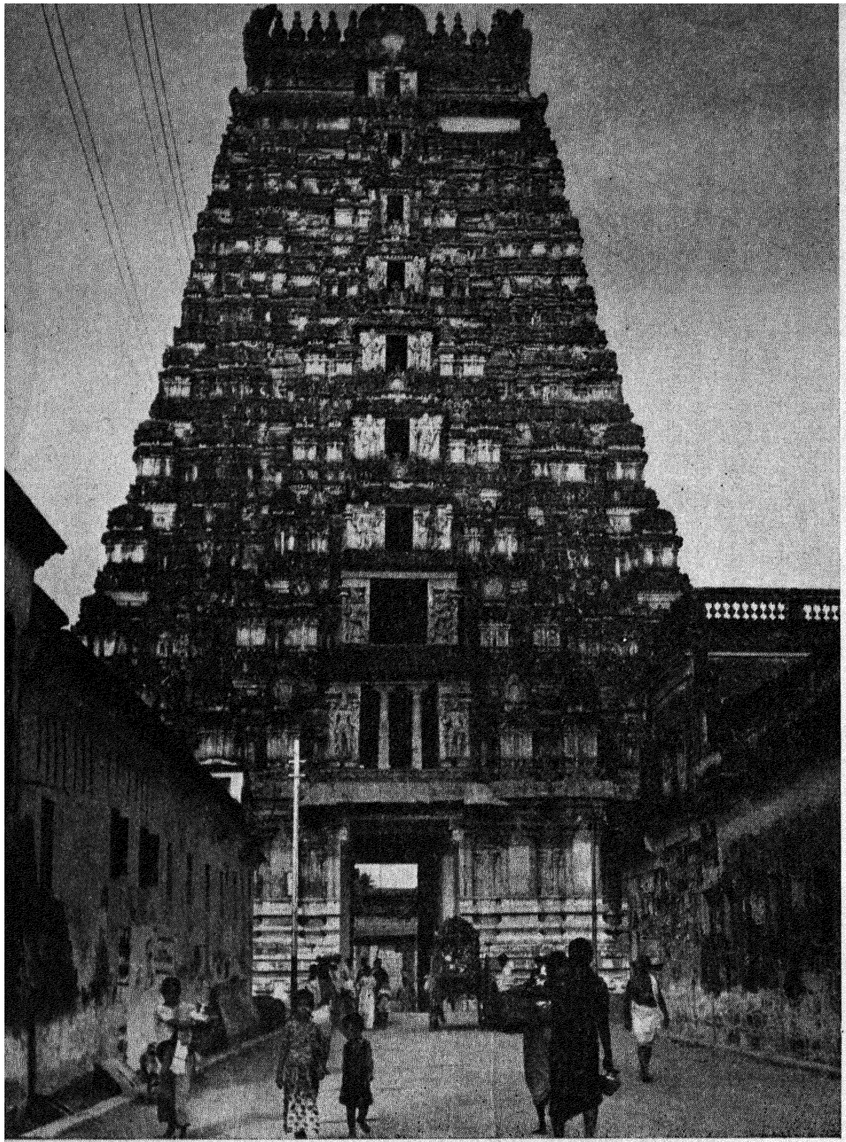




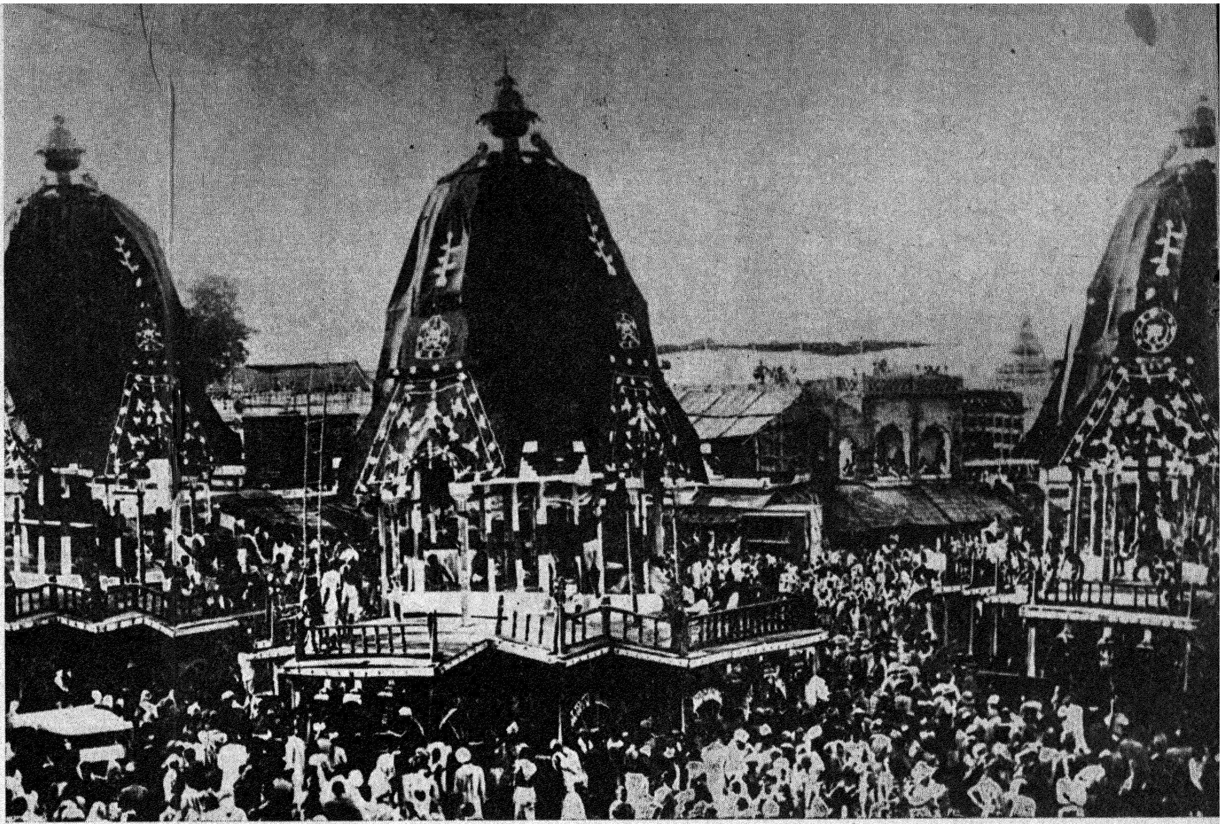
Kailasa temple, Ellora



Thirukkalukundram (Hill of the Sacred Kites), Madras State

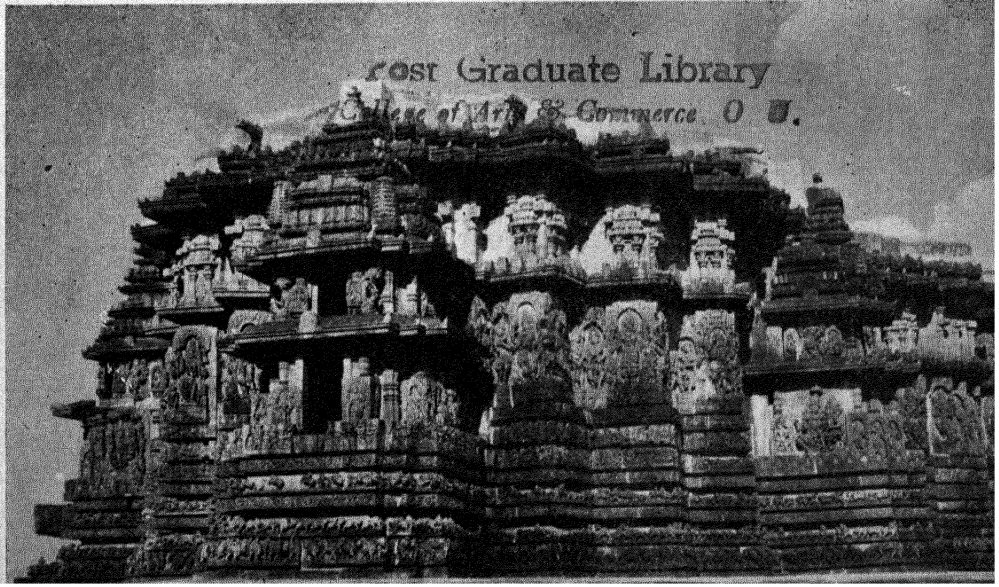


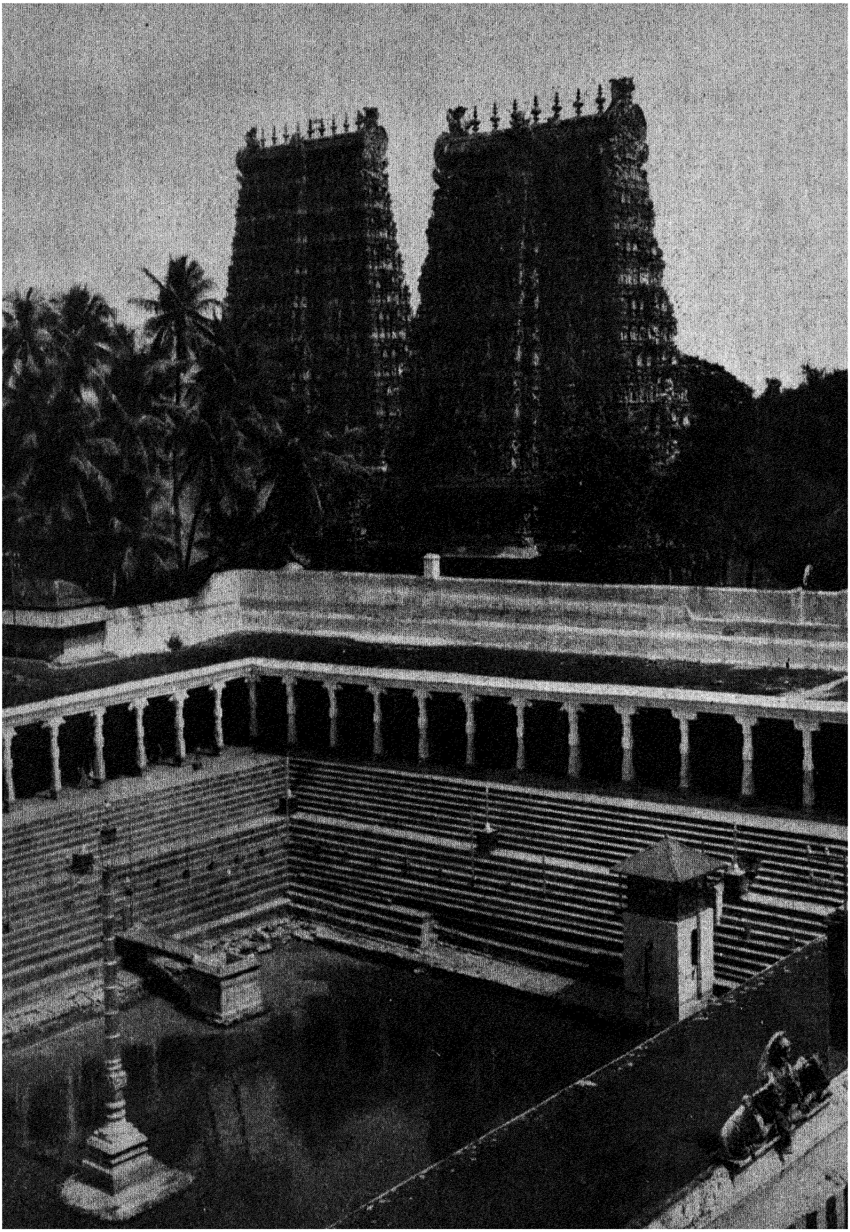
Ranganathaswamy temple, Srirangam



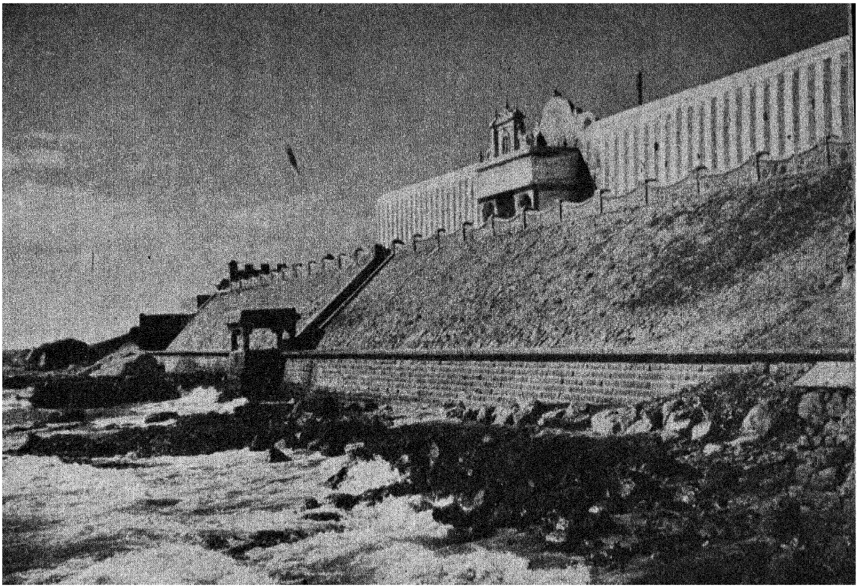
The car festival of Jagannath Puri

A wing of the Hoysaleswara temple, Halebid

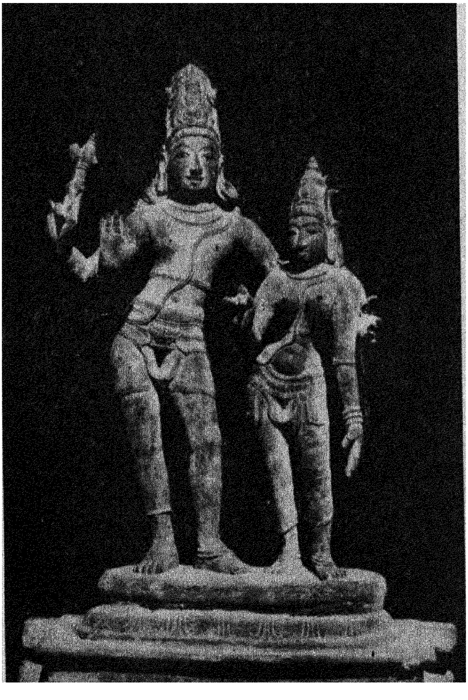

Post Graduate Library



Meenakshi temple, Madurai

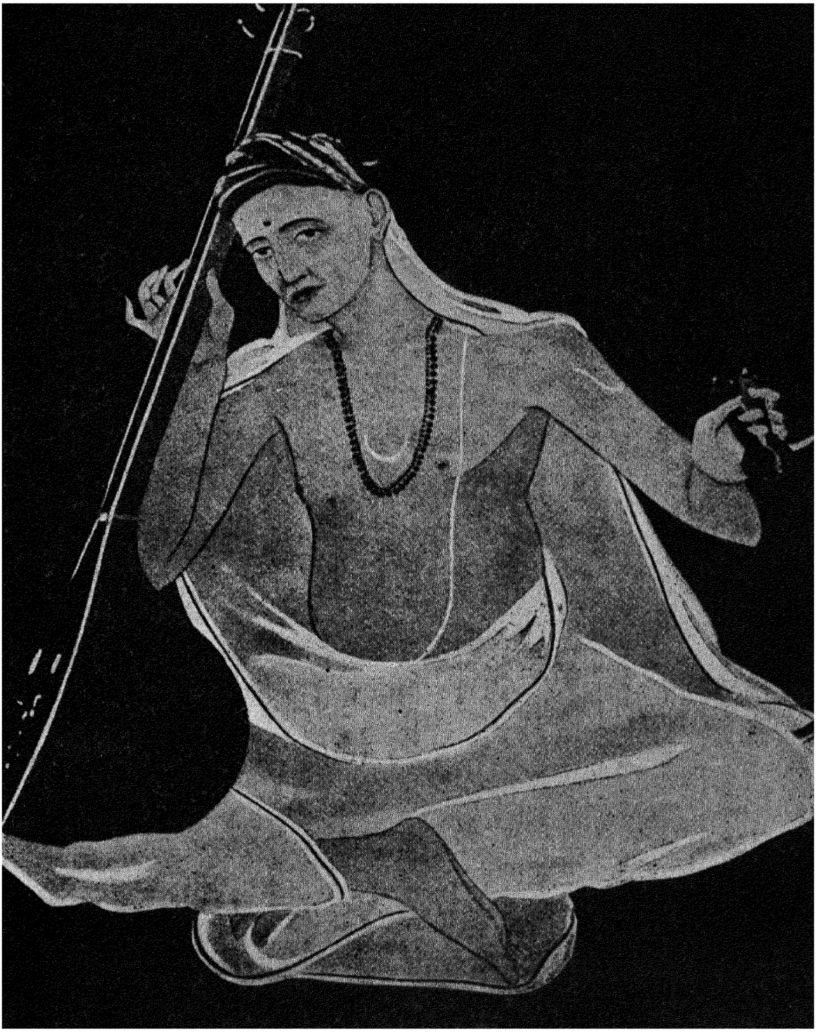


The temple of Kanya Kumari

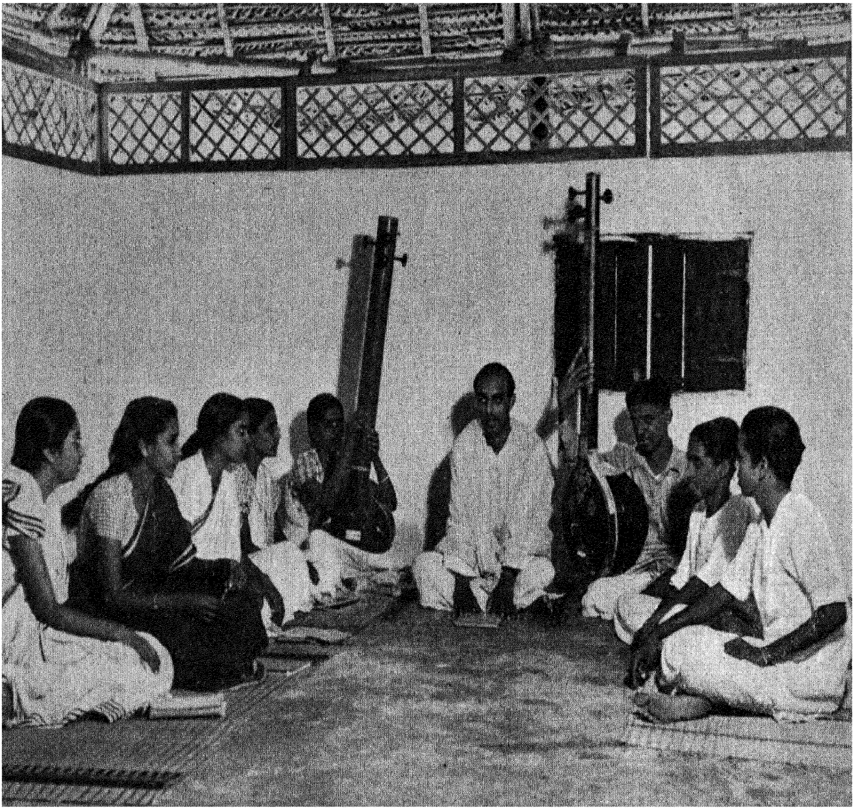


Figures in bronze, Madras Museum

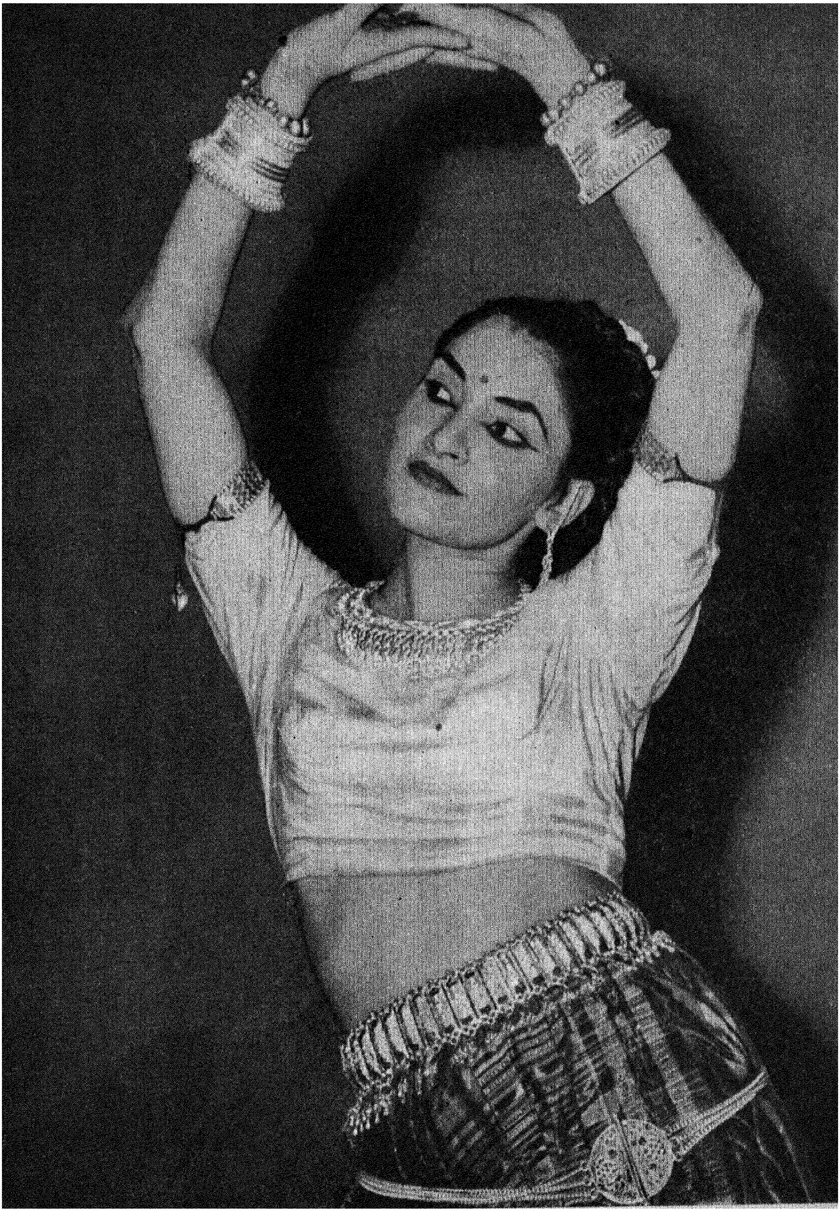
Sculptured representation of Bharata Natya poses in the Nataraja temple, Chidambaram



Saint Thyagaraja



A music class



Odissi dance

Kathakali dancers

when stone sculpture suffered a sad decline in the North, from the twelfth century onwards, South Indian bronze image-makers went on producing their finest masterpieces by the thousand. These bronzes are among the most priceless heirlooms of Indian art and include, besides the more famous Dancing Siva images, some of the best effigies of royalty and of the Vaisnava and Saiva saints. It is a constant output, lasting a full thousand years, and it has not yet ceased.

Much could also be said of the folk arts of South India, many of which flourished well into the twentieth century. But perhaps even this sketchy summary of South India's contribution to the sum total of Indian art will suffice to show that this contribution has been grossly underestimated. From Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda to Ajanta and Ellura, from the lovely shrines at Mamallapuram to the mighty temples of Madurai, Chidambaram and Tiruchirappalli, from the wall paintings in the caves of Ajanta, Bagh and Sittanavasal to the unmatched beauty of South Indian bronze images, the Dravida country has produced some of the greatest masterpieces of this peninsula.

MUSIC AND DANCE

Rukmini Devi

The contribution of South India to the totality of Indian culture is great and has a special significance. This is due to the fact that the South did not suffer from foreign invasions to the extent that the other parts of the country did. The unified culture of India, which was common to all parts of the country prior to the Muslim invasions, was preserved untouched in the South longer than in the other regions of India.

By the time the Muslims reached the South they had already been profoundly influenced by the culture of this country and were, in a sense, no foreigners. The dynasties of Bahmani were great patrons of Hindu art and literature. It was only when the unassimilable Europeans appeared on the scene that we began to be affected by new cultural concepts.

Music and dance, as we know in the South, are perhaps the systems most closely related to the Indian *Sastras* on these subjects. The fundamental contribution that South India has made in these fields is that of beauty and depth.

According to the *Sastras, Sangita* or music includes the dance also. Dance in our country is music made visible. The same spirit pervades both the arts to a remarkable degree. However, taking music as a separate art for purpose of discussion, our appreciation of it has been guided and channelled by well-developed critical knowledge which still survives among the people. Unfortunately this is not the case with the dance where, owing to historical reasons, this knowledge has lapsed making the development of the art chaotic, to a certain extent.

But these two great art forms have played an important part in the life of India and have entered the hearts of all by being the media by which religion and philosophy have spread in this land. Whether in drama, dance or on the con-

cert stage, in the temples, in the fields, in the lives of the peasant, the king or the householder, music gave richness to our civilisation and culture. Without this great musical heritage, there would have been an emptiness in the country's life.

In modern times, unimaginative education has been responsible for a good deal of ignorance and lack of interest in this treasure which we have inherited. Yet, till very recently, the Indian rulers and the nobility patronised our great musicians and composers, who were, therefore, able to occupy themselves with the task of preserving the tradition without interference from the outer world. In South India, this tradition has survived far more than anywhere else. In the homes children were taught the music of the great composers. This has helped the growth of an enlightened audience which is an indispensable requisite for the growth of good art.

Indians are a highly musical race, and music is the complete expression of the soul of India reflecting her inner life. No country can perhaps exist without musical expression of some kind or other. Especially is this true of India, where life is lived in so close a contact with this great art. In the earliest epic of India, the *Ramayana,* which is also the earliest epic of the world, sage Valmiki describes the story of Sri Ramachandra in metric and rhythmical beauty, expressive of the deepest human emotions, and also bringing into it the essence of the *Vedas.* The sons of Sri Rama, who were brought up in hermitage in the forest, learnt to sing the entire *Ramayana,* and with the magnificent beauty of their voices which brought the sense of holiness to those who heard it, they thrilled the sages in the forest.

Such meaning is given to music in India that it is known as the very soul of the people, the language of the highest self, which speaks to all creation. Sri Krishna, the divine cowherd, was beautiful enough to charm all by His very personality. Yet, He used the flute to stir in the hearts of all that which music alone can move. Thus did He attract all creation, not only human but all nature, to Himself. The

animals stood spell-bound hearing the music of His flute, as did the lions before the lutes of Orpheus.

There is not a field of activity in India to which music has not given its stimulus. India's greatest contribution is the spiritual outlook allied to creation in its manifold expressions.

The root knowledge of music and dance is the science of the emotions. It is because of this that the *raga* system is the essence of Indian music. The West specialises in harmony, India in melody. Melody is the expression of the individual. It is an expression of individual aspiration. An individual is in himself an embodiment of myriad emotions with their depths and subtleties. And, there is nothing more varied or fascinating than human emotions. It is for these reasons that the *raga* system of music has taken deep root in Indian consciousness.

These basic concepts of Indian music have been understood and preserved in the South Indian tradition. From the days of the Nayanars, whose hymns were probably sung in their times in ways not much different from the traditional modes in which they are sung in Saiva places of worship today, to the present day when authentic South Indian music of a very high order is being composed, this concept of the art as the very voice of God has been jealously kept and guarded. Nothing has survived that has not been the result of a deep spiritual and religious impulse.

It is also in South India that most of the important works on Music, after the *Sangita-Ratnakara,* were written. In his *Chathurdandi-Prakasika,* Venkata Makhi made a great and highly original contribution to musical theory by his classification of *ragas* and by his arrangement of the *melakarta* scheme. He has exerted considerable influence on the work of Bhatkhande and his pupils with regard to Hindustani music.

Dance in South India has closely followed the way of the music. The variety in folk-dancing is incredibly rich. Apart from the well-defined patterns of folk-dancing in the different linguistic areas, such as Tamil, Telugu, Karnataka and

Kerala, in each one of these areas there are numerous local variations and dances peculiar to small localities.

Classical dancing, in common with classical music, has a religious basis. In South India, the main body of dance tradition was maintained intact by the Devadasis who were attached to temples. Their performances which had the name 'Sadir' were held not only in temples but also in palaces, houses, etc. on auspicious occasions. This dance fell into disrepute for many reasons and became nearly extinct. Among Devadasis there were great dancers who had a perfect technique and, often, great devotion. To them the privilege of dancing in the temples was an opportunity to offer their art to the Supreme. In this they had no other motive. Society is more responsible than the Devadasi for the corruption that nearly destroyed the art.

Dance-dramas also developed out of the Bharata Natya tradition, using the Bharata Natya technique. Some of them, as in Tanjore and Kuchupudi, were performed in temples by men dancers of the priestly class, who were called Bhagavathars. On this account they came to be called *Bhagavatha Mela Natakas.* The Tanjore group of these plays that have come down to us were written by Venkatarama Sastrin of Melattur, who lived in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Kuchupudi dramas were composed by Siddhendra Yogi in the seventeenth or eighteenth century.

The *Kuravanjis* were performed in temples by the Devadasis. All *Kuravanjis* are alike in subject matter and portray the human soul, represented by the heroine, in search of God. The oldest and best of the *Kuravanjis* now available was written by Rajappa Kavirayar in Kutralam in the eighteenth century. The only *Kuravanji* still performed in a temple is the *Sarabhoji Kuravanji* in praise of Maharaja Sarabhoji of Tanjore. This is performed in the Tanjore temple.

In Kerala, the dance of Kathakali developed. Though Kathakali has its affiliation to Bharata Natya, it must have been derived from some local dance form on which Bharata's rules were imposed. Kathakali is rich in the four kinds of *abhinaya.* It is more a play than a dance.

During recent times, South India has made a great impact upon the whole of the country, particularly in the field of the dance. South Indian music which is more difficult of appreciation is slowly being heard and liked in different parts of India. It must also be known that there is a far larger audience for classical South Indian music in the South than for classical North Indian music in the North. The attitude which made the people of the North feel that the teaching of music to girls was something to be ashamed of is partly responsible for the deterioration of musical taste in the North. Both in the North and in the South the devotional aspect of music has always been its strongest point, and unless the vast majority of women learn and appreciate the art, the home becomes an empty shell devoid of culture.

I have always felt that the difference between the North and the South Indian styles in music came into existence solely owing to the influence of the different invasions. The Muslim influence has been most potent in the North. Being highly sensitive to art and mystical in temperament, the Muslims enriched themselves and India by their contact. Many of the greatest musicians of the North have been Muslims, but it is obvious that their music was great because Indian music was great. The music in other Muslim countries has neither the greatness of Indian music nor as much variety and richness. Just as all dance has its origin in Bharata's *Natya Sastra,* though branching out into different styles known as Kathakali, Manipuri, Kathak etc., all Indian music had a common origin. The variety has come in the blending of local influences with the original art. The South has been more untouched by all these influences. I am quite sure, for example, that the music and dance of Orissa in the past was far more truly South Indian than North Indian. The art forms of Orissa and Andhra must have had very much in common. In the ancient days the migrants from Orissa who colonised parts of South-East Asia had influenced art there to such an extent that not only is the dance of South-East Asia obviously Indian but South Indian in origin as can be seen by those who go to Cambodia and other neighbouring countries.

Neither music nor dance will live anywhere unless that which gave them life lives. Indian music and dance are all bound to become conventional, monotonous and out of date if they are merely to be demonstrated through skill and intellectual ability. The one quality which has unified the whole of India has been that of *bhakti* or devotion. Even the Muslim musicians, whose forefathers were Hindus converted to Islam, while they influenced the music by their rich voices and mysticism, never took the music away from religion. Krishna, for example, was a God universally adopted in the realm of dance and music.

Indians as a race are noted for their sense of devotion. Their love was poured out in music and dance. When dance descended to the level of the courtesans it died. Only dedication, self-forgetfulness, is the key to creativeness, neither intellect nor money. In the musical world I see a ray of light in the South for the religious spirit still lives there more deeply. The art of dance is, however, not free from danger. In the long run, if music lives all the Arts will live, for it is the essence and soul of every form of art.

LITERATURE

M. SATYANARAYANA

The builders of Indian culture from time immemorial have pressed many media into service to mould, expand, build and preserve the Indian heritage. The genius of the individual, to whichever part of the country he belonged, was fully utilised for the purpose of its expression and its preservation.

In the realm of expression of the human personality, either in the form of its individuality or in the form of integrated social growth in its various facets, the spoken word or the word preserved in writing has played a very great role. The concepts, old and new, have been embodied in different media, in the most artistic forms, which have made indelible imprints on the human mind from generation to generation.

Among the media chosen by the builders of the culture, it is very difficult to make a comparative assessment—whether the word preserved in writing is more valuable than the matter moulded and shaped into an image, in colour or otherwise. It may be asserted that if the physical image is the basement for a cultural heritage, the mental or the literary images are the edifices.

But the activity in India in the field of cultural advancement has been continuously vigorous; the images, visual as well as mental, have been constantly in creation, and the Indian mind never lost either its vigour or its capacity for expansion.

The varied geographical features of India, the high mountains, the vast sea-shores, the plains and plateaus, the rivers and their valleys provided different emotional backgrounds to people living in the different regions, but the builders of our culture understood these emotional backgrounds, harmonised them, and pressed them into service through literature. They have thus handed down to us a heritage which transcends differences based on geography, race or religion.

While the leaders of political movements, particularly those engaged in military expeditions, recognised geographical distances, the leaders in the field of culture, either of religion and philosophy, or of art and literature, were never inhibited by physical barriers. They carried the light of wisdom, the beauty of image, the melody of word and the grandeur of thought along with them, without fear or prejudice, to known and unknown regions. The builders of our civilisation created a union of thought, weaving the threads of the characteristics of the different parts of the country into a fabric which is one and the same and is indivisible.

Just as a fabric is the result of the contributions made by different elements of Nature and its beauty cannot be shown in parts, the Indian cultural heritage also cannot be divided into parts. At the same time, each element has a value of its own. Thus, it is no exaggeration to say that there is not much Indian culture without South India; of course, there is no South India without India.

The preserved word inscribed in letter, known as literature, is a large belt on which the nation's heritage is conveyed from generation to generation for absorption, emulation and amplification. Indian literature found its origin in the *Vedas.* The *Rig Veda,* first of the four in the series, originated in the modern Punjab. Its first commentator, Apasthamba, came from the Godavari valley in South India, much before Panini in the pre-Christian era. The galaxy of commentators, who followed Apasthamba, were innumerable, and many of them were from the South.

Is it not clear from this evidence that Sanskrit was as much a language of the South as it was of the North? It is well known that Sanskrit flourished in the pre-Christian era, during the days of the Southern trinity of rulers, namely, the Chera (Kerala), the Pandya (South Tamilnad), and the Chola (north Tamilnad). The South of India not only received and mastered the Sanskrit language, but also enriched it, with vocabulary and thought.

The literature built during the periods of the Satavahanas and the Ikshvakus, the Chalukyas and the Cholas, the Hoyasalas and the Kakatiyas, and the Rashtrakutas or the Rayas

of the Vijayanagar Empire, was of a very high order and can stand comparison with literary development in any other part of the country. The contribution of Sanskrit language has been highly artistic as well as progressive in its thought content, and its literature was so well studied in the South. This study produced great *Acharyas*.

Sankaracharya, whose reputation admits hardly any parallel, proved he was not only a master artist in expression but was the last word on philosophical thought. Sankara had his birth in Kerala, the south-western corner of India. The exponent of *Visistadvaita* philosophy, namely Ramanuja, was equally well-versed in Sanskrit language. Ramanuja came from Tamilnad, while Madhvacharya, who is the third among the galaxy of *Acharyas*, came from Karnataka. Vallabha, the fourth *Acharya*, came from Andhra whose contribution to Sanskrit literature was unsurpassed. Thus the four regions of South India—Kerala, Tamilnad, Karnataka and Andhra, made their valuable contribution to Indian heritage. These *Acharyas* are regarded as the vanguards of our culture in the realm of mind.

Scholars tell us that the South Indian languages, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada, are different in their word content, idiom and syntax.

These differences did not, however, prove an obstruction in the path of cultural penetration and progress. Again, the chain of Buddhists that brought the Pali language and the innumerable Jain monks who used 'Ardhamagadhi' as their medium and spread themselves throughout South India did not treat the South Indian languages as alien. Otherwise how could a work of merit like the *Silappadikaram* be produced by Jain monks and the *Manimekhalai* by Buddhists ? It may be remembered that these two are the earliest literary works in Tamil.

Language cannot be separated from the people, nor the people can be separated from their language. Literature clothed in the people's language is the bed-rock of civilisation.

The Tamil language, eldest among the South Indian languages, built a great literature for itself early in the

Christian era, and moulded it according to the genius of its people. Kannada, the north-western neighbour of Tamil, settled itself as a distinct language very much later, while the west coast of South India, lying behind the Ghats, built its own language known as Malayalam. The Andhra country, about as big as all the other regions put together, acted more or less as the smelting centre for a number of centuries of the material received from the four corners of the country, namely, north, west, south and east. Thus, naturally, the people living in the Andhra region took a little more time to discover and develop their own language, Telugu. It may be found from its word-content as well as its idiom and syntax, that the triple stream consisting of Sanskrit, Prakrit and the Dravidian, flows in it smoothly.

It is also a well-known fact that the cult of *bhakti* had its birth place in the South. The *Mahabhagavata,* the perennial source of *bhakti,* was composed in the South. The Alwars and the Nayanars provided inexhaustible treasures for devotional literature. The 'dasa' literature of Karnataka is equally noted for the elegance of its style as well its devotional content.

The competition between the Saivites and the Vaisnava saints gave to Tamil a composition which can rank amongst world classics. Tiruvalluvar's *Kural,* which provides a compendium of values to help a balanced life and an organised society, is a gem of which any nation can be proud. Similarly, there are works of great merit in the other South Indian languages, which have not only enriched their literatures but helped the evolution of human thought.

In India, the great epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* provide the best models of creative art. The literatures of the South are rich in the adaptations of these classics. The *Mahabharata* was translated into Telugu early in the eleventh century by Nannaya; Kambar, in Tamil, produced a *Ramayana* which has survived nearly a thousand years on account of its artistic splendour and literary excellence. The *Ramayana* produced by 'Ponna' is equally popular in Kannada. The cult of *Virasaivism* spread itself producing vast literature as the 'Vacana Sahitya' in Kannada. Its

influence on the Telugu language is still fresh; and it is very difficult to distinguish Kannada from Telugu, and Telugu from Kannada, as far as the literature in the early middle period was concerned.

The brightest period for the promotion of literature in South India was the period of the Vijayanagar Empire. Telugu, Kannada and Tamil literatures made tremendous strides during this period. The literary output in the courts of the Vijayanagar rulers and of their chiefs in Tanjore and other places was voluminous. Poetry acquired great elegance of style and imaginative quality. In fact, the foundations for modern literature in the South were laid during this period.

With the advent of the study of English, like the other Indian languages, South Indian languages also developed the literature of prose and such creative forms as fiction, short story and the essay.

Judging from their quality and excellence, and the accumulated human experience and social and spiritual awareness they embody, the literatures of the South Indian languages provide sufficient variations to be pondered over, and different directions to be pursued further. Quite apart from the diction, style, idiom and the peculiarities of each language, the literature of the South presents material of absorbing interest and enjoyment.

SOCIAL CUSTOMS AND INSTITUTIONS

DR. K. K. PILLAY

It is widely accepted that there has occurred a fusion of different social customs during the course of India's long history. The divergence of views arises only in assessing the share of each of the component factors of the admixture, in determining their comparative antiquity and, finally, in trying to evaluate their relative superiority.

Various schools of approach have attempted to assess the genesis and nature of the social customs and institutions of South India. In the first place, there are those, who, imbued by cultural chauvinism, exalt the glory, purity and antiquity of the indigenous factors. On the other hand, there are writers, both Indian and European, who present a distorted picture of the customs and traditions without a historical sense of understanding or sympathy. Neither of these views is acceptable to the objective student of Indian history.

In reality, the process of fusion of the Aryan, Dravidian, Proto-Austroloid and other cultures has been so long-drawn-out, so intricate and so indistinguishably intertwined that it is not easy to determine the exact proportion of the component elements which have contributed to the development of the unified system. The view that in the formation of Indian culture, 75 per cent is composed of the non-Aryan element seems to be as much an over-simplification of a complex problem as the vague and unqualified generalisations like the 'Aryanisation of South India'.

The truth of the matter is that, after the advent of the Aryans, some of their ideas penetrated into the South; in certain cases, their ideas triumphed, while in others, the incomers adopted the indigenous practices, assimilated and transmitted them to other parts of the country. It is of supreme importance to remember that, some time after the sixth century A.D., the Hindu culture which had been evolved in North India declined, while, through the contact

of the Aryan and the Dravidian, the Deccan and South India had produced a virile cultural synthesis, which, in turn, exercised a profound influence on Indian civilisation as a whole.

Thanks to the comparative immunity from foreign invasions, the South was able to preserve the traditional way of life much more compactly than the North. On the whole, in the present fabric of the South Indian social system, we find pristine indigenous customs and institutions flourishing side by side with the imported ones, while there are numerous others which bear the traces of partial or complete amalgamation. Obviously, therefore, one has to guard against all facile or sweeping generalisations.

An outstanding illustration of the need for abundant caution in dealing with social history is seen in respect of the origin and evolution of the caste system, which has perhaps been the most distinctive institution of the Hindu social order. It is frequently stated that the caste system was introduced into South India by the Aryans. But this is not completely true.

Even in the early epoch of Dravidian history, when Aryan influence was least traceable, there had emerged certain social divisions based on occupation. Early Tamil classics speak of smiths, washermen, potters and so on, and the purely Tamil names employed to designate them indisputably indicate the indigenous origin of these groups.

After the advent of the Aryans there occurred the introduction of the caste system based on *varna* or colour. For a long time, however, the Aryan pattern stood out as an exotic, and it was not grafted well on to the social order. There was, for instance, no clear-cut class of Kshatriyas in the South. Some, like the Kadambas and Vakatakas, were Brahmanas who established royal dynasties. In many other cases, Vaisyas or Sudras assumed royal positions after which they were elevated to the rank of Kshatriyas. The social promotion was often sanctioned by the performance of the sacred rite called the *Hiranyagarbha*.

Again, in the South, the Vaisya class has not been absolutely distinct from that of the Sudras, as required by the

theoretical prescription. It has been less clear-cut in the Deccan than in North India and still less so in the extreme south, where the dividing line between the Vaisyas and the Sudras was not quite marked.

Thus in South India the caste system was the product of a peculiar amalgam of the occupational basis and the *varna* or colour basis, the two acting and reacting on each other. Nor is it correct to think that all the Brahmanas of South India are direct descendants of the Northern Aryans. The name of sub-divisions among them like Vadama, Brihatcharanam and Ashtasahasram are tell-tale indications of the absorption of certain indigenous people within the Brahmanical fold.

Early in the history of the country caste assumed a hereditary character, though for a considerable time there existed a remarkable elasticity. Gradually sub-castes arose and each sub-caste developed conventions which tended to widen the increasing exclusiveness. We hear of eighteen castes in several inscriptions of the medieval period, while a curious and rather inexplicable classification into the right-hand and left-hand castes is found mentioned in epigraphy and literature down to the eighteenth century.

Not only did the South present an extreme rigidity of caste and a tendency for the multiplication of sub-castes, but it is in the South that untouchability ran to its farthest height. It is true that the Buddhist *Jataka* stories mention the existence in the North of the *chandala* caste of untouchables. But it was in the South that it took a much firmer hold on the social fabric.

Untouchability and unapproachability appeared in their most acute form in Kerala, where they were systematised and perfected more than anywhere else in India. This is rather surprising, because Kerala has been famous through the ages for religious tolerance. It is there that the Jews, Christians and Muslims, not to speak of different sects of Hindus, were patronised by the ruling kings. Probably the systematisation of untouchability occurred because of the existence of different classes of aborigines in the land. The

Nambudiris, who are believed to have belonged to the pure Aryan stock, organised themselves into a powerful aristocracy controlling the temples and, therefore, found it necessary to develop untouchability to its utmost logical extent.

South India, including Kerala, has been pre-eminently a land of temples. Even the smallest village has its sacred fanes. It is remarkable that there have existed through the ages shrines of the primitive gods and goddesses like Karuppan and Mariamman, alongside of the later ones. In the organisation and set-up of the later temples there was a considerable fusion of the Dravidian and Aryan ideas. In respect of deities too, there has occurred a remarkable measure of amalgamation.

While certain Vedic gods had a prominent position in the pantheon, some of the Dravidian deities also found their places in it. The Dravidian Devi, known as Korravai or Kali, became absorbed into Durga or Parvati. Uma is probably a transformation of Amma. Muruga, the age-long deity of the Dravidian Tamils, became Subrahmania or Kartikeya in a new setting against the background of additional legends. Even Mayon and Mal are believed to be old pre-Aryan Tamil names, subsequently identified with the later Aryan god Vishnu. The oldest clear reference to the pastoral Krishna occurs in the Tamil classics. The Krishna cult appears to have been carried to the North by the Deccan tribes like the Abhiras.

Temples developed, and by the medieval period, they dominated the life of the people. The temple was more than a place of worship. It influenced the social, economic and cultural life of the people. As landholder, consumer of goods and services, as an employer, as an agent of poor relief, as a centre of cultural and educational activity, in short as the focus of the social life and development, the South Indian temple has played an important role. At present, under the influence of new-fangled ideas, the number of devoted worshippers is dwindling. Nevertheless, it continues to dominate the life of the villagers in a large measure. Some of the famous temples, like those of Chidambaram and Sri-

rangam, Rameshwaram and Kannya Kumari, are frequently visited by pious Hindus from all over India.

Apart from the daily worship, the various periodic celebrations draw large numbers of people. *Sri Jayanti, Tai Pusam, Maha-Sivaratri* as well as the *Tirukkalyanam* and the grand annual festivals are some of the occasions which attract crowds of people from far and near.

Associated with the religious observances there are feasts as well as fasts. On days like *Sivaratri* and *Ekadasi,* pious Hindus abstain from food. Not only Brahmanas, but many of the other Hindus, too, observe such feasts or *vratas*. On all sacred days abstinence from sexual indulgence is enjoined on the people. It is believed that these observances help the spiritual well-being of the individuals, and it need hardly be added that they contribute, at the same time, to the physical and moral edification of the observers. Though there are local variations in respect of details, there is a notable measure of uniformity in their adoption throughout India.

A detailed description of the *vratas* is found in the *Puranas* and the *Smriti* works of the early medieval period, such as *Chaturvarga-Chintamani, Vratakala-Viveka* and *Vrata-Tattva.* These *vrata* observances were popularised among all sections of the people. It is significant that the writers of the *Puranas* not only invented many new *vrata* rites but even went to the extent of absorbing many non-Brahmanical observances by changing their names or their rituals. It is indisputable that the *vratas* have wholesome effects on the observers, and they hardly deserve the unwarranted castigations made on them by writers like the Abbe Dubois.

From times of old there were popular amusements, which relieved the monotony of routine life. They included cock fight, bull fight, horse riding and so on. Tamil, Kannada and Telugu literary works refer to numerous such diversions. *Kathakalashepams* and religious discourses of different patterns were popular until very recently. Fairs were held in villages and towns. These fairs attracted large numbers of people and various entertainments were held in connection with fairs as well as festivals in temples.

Festivals were occasions of great rejoicing. The festivals celebrated in different parts of South India were religious, social or often religio-social. Among early festivals, the *Indra Vila* of the Chola land, the festival at the hill of Tirupparunkunram, the *Panguni Vila* and *Kartigai Vila,* besides the festivals associated with rivers such as that of *Adipperukku,* may be mentioned as examples. Some of them have since gone out of practice.

The *Indra Vila,* described in *Manimekhalai,* is not heard of later in the South. It is significant that Kalidasa describes a similar festival of Indra in his *Raghuvamsa.* In the *Vedas,* Indra, the thunder-god, is one of the chief deities. Either through the influence of the Aryans, or independently, the Tamilians regarded him as one of the presiding deities of their urban life and celebrated the Indra festival.

In ancient Tamil land, the festival of the Spring was associated with Kama or Cupid. It was called *Kaman Vilavu* or *Villavan Vilavu.* The early Tamils associated the festival of Kama, the God of Love, with Spring, the time of merry-making. But what is now called *Kaman Vila* or *Kaman Pandigai* has a different significance. It is a commemoration of the burning of Kama or Manmatha. This *Kaman Vila* or *Holi,* as it is called in common parlance, is a very important festival of North India. At present in some parts of South India, such as Salem and Coimbatore, Kama festival is celebrated more or less on the North Indian pattern. The change in the *Kaman Vila* of old indicates the transformation due to Aryan influence.

The *Kartigai Dipam,* or the festival of lamps, is a day of festivity from very early times. It falls on the day on which the moon is in conjunction with the constellation of *Kartigai.* The early anthology, the *Ahananuru,* refers to this festival, while the *Narrinai* mentions that on that occasion the wealthy distributed alms to the poor. Though the latter feature is not now in vogue, the festival itself is continued down to this day. Lighting of the beacon on the hill temple at Tiruvannamalai is still a resplendent ceremony.

The lamp is a sacred ornament of every South Indian home. The lamp is worshipped every evening; moreover, it

is associated with all the Hindu ceremonies. The *Dipavali* witnesses the festival of lamps and illumination *par excellence* in North as well as South India. *Thai Niradal* or the ceremonious bathing in *Thai* (December-January), was in vogue from early times. The *paripadal* associates it with *Tiruvadirai.* It has been suggested that this festival is an imitation of the worship of Katyayani by the Gopis of Gokulam in order to win the love of Krishna. The *Narrinai* mentions *Thai Niradal* as specially important for girls in order to secure suitable husbands. It is an open question whether or not an early practice of the extreme South was later given a legendary background.

The *Pongal* is distinctively a harvest festival of the South celebrated through the ages. More or less similar festivals are observed by all agricultural people though the date of the celebration varies.

A word about marriage ceremonies. Child marriage is not mentioned in early literature; apparently it is a later introduction through northern influence. The marriage ceremony among most sections of people in the South is elaborate. But each caste acquired its own distinctive conventions connected with the celebration of the marriage. The earlier indigenous pattern of celebration is described in the *Ahananuru,* while the combined Aryan and Tamilian custom is mentioned in the *Silappadikaram.* The Aryan form of ritual is distinguished by the use of sacrificial fire and employment of the priest.

The *Tali* is distinctively a South Indian ornament; but it is not possible to determine the date of its origin. Perhaps a reference in the *Nedunalvadai* suggests the use of an ornament like the *Tali.* There is a clearer indication of its adoption by the time of the *Silappadikaram.* However, it is significant that now almost every class of Hindus in South India, including Brahmanas, adopt the custom of the bridegroom tying the *Tali* as a marriage symbol around the neck of the bride. This symbol should never be parted with during the life-time of the husband.

Thus, we find certain customs which are peculiar to the region, and certain others akin to those prevailing in the rest

of India. South India also has contributed its share to the mighty ocean of Indian culture, and, in turn, has received much from it. The impact of Western education and Western ideas has tended to weaken the hold of caste, the joint family, the corporate life of the village, as well as the importance of the numerous ceremonies and festivals which have been observed through the ages.

The older customs and institutions in their own way provided for a disciplined and harmonious life. It is a problem of great importance how the new life is to be grafted on to the old one, without losing the merits of either.

POLITICAL CONCEPTS AND INSTITUTIONS

Dr. K. M. Panikkar

Basically, Southern political institutions and conceptions are not different from those of the North. The differences arose gradually because of the different conditions under which they developed.

Two circumstances are especially noticeable in this evolution.

North India was, at different times, subjected to external pressures which changed the character of its institutions. The pressure of the Sakas, Kushans, Huns and later of the Muslims and the constant social upheavals resulting from these prevented a peaceful evolution of institutions. This was not the case in South India. The Muslim raid on the South by Malik Kafur was only an episode. India south of the Tungabhadra was able to organise herself for defence and to maintain the integrity of her social life till the Marathas took over that mission.

The second characteristic was even more significant. There was a territorial integration in South India at least from the early centuries of the Christian era which has persisted till today. The Chola, Chera and Pandya countries were defined even in the time of Asoka, and the literature of the Gupta period bears witness to their integration. From the Satavahana times the Deccan plateau had also become integrated under a succession of dynasties, of which the Chalukyas and the Rastrakutas were the most important. Thus, the Pandyas, Cholas, Chalukyas and other dynasties represented integrated territorial divisions, which even when dynasties changed or vanished behind the curtain of history continued their unbroken life.

A third difference between the South and the North in political evolution lay in the fact that the dominant tradition in the North was imperial, mainly because of the uniform physical features of the Gangetic plain, while the South was

monarchical, that is, of states confined to well-defined areas. Even when, as in the time of the Cholas, other historical areas like the Chera or the Pandya country were brought under subjection, neither their political nor their territorial identity suffered eclipse. This was so even under the imperial rule of Vijayanagar. Their viceroyalties broadly followed the earlier territorial divisions. The Nayaks of Madurai represented the Pandya tradition; those at Tanjore the Chola tradition. This integration which has come down to our day has had the result of giving to South Indian institutions a continuity of development which is absent in North India.

As we have observed, the main political conceptions were the same. The dominant political idea was that of the monarchy, of a king whose function it was to uphold *Dharma* and whose powers were limited by the conceptions relating to *Dharma* and the social order. In this there was but little difference betwen the North and the South. Where the basic difference came in respect of political ideas and institutions was in relation to government. In North India, because perhaps of the nature of external pressure, the tendency was towards a centralisation of administration. No doubt, the size of the country made some decentralisation necessary but such decentralisation itself was through a repetition of the imperial tradition through Viceroys and Governors. The Southern tradition was basically different. The normal method in the South was to devolve power on village councils, *sabhas* or *urs,* and, at higher level, on *nathukuttam* or district assemblies. The *ur* assembly was probably a development of the *manram.* These village councils were entrusted with different kinds of functions such as looking after temple endowments and irrigation works; some also administered justice.

The village councils often acted as trustees for public welfare. These councils comprised the adult members of each village. Besides these councils, there existed many other organised bodies whose function it was to look after some institution or perform some community service. The difference was that while the village council had the widest range

of functions and may be said to have been a general-purposes organisation, the groups and corporations had only specified functions. A committee or body may look after a particular temple. A guild may look after a separate trade. But only a *kuttam* or village assembly had general functions of a public character to attend to. The learned historian of South India declares 'that even in matters that fell within the competence of a particular group, the assembly had a concurrent jurisdiction to which anyone could appeal, if the group concerned was in default'.

We have epigraphical and other evidence that the village councils worked through committees. Committees known as *variayoms,* to which the general body delegated some of its executive functions, are mentioned in inscriptions and other records. For example, we have mention of some committees in charge of irrigation tanks, and of others in charge of gardens. There is also record of what may be called a supervision committee elected for the year consisting of senior and more experienced members. These and similar facts constitute clear evidence that the village assemblies were essential functioning units of government, involving a very real association of the people in the administration of matters closely connected with their own welfare.

In the Vijayanagar period there is ample evidence that these village and district assemblies were responsible not only for local administration but also for the collection of revenue for the government. Even remission of revenue was made through them and with their consent. There is also convincing evidence of these bodies on their own authority remitting revenues in times of calamities, famines, floods etc.

It will thus be seen that the institutions that South India developed in regard to government involved not merely a large amount of decentralisation but also participation by the people in local administration : a tendency to which we seem to be now reverting. The evils and inconveniences of monarchical autocracy were, to a large extent, mitigated by the people themselves directly conducting administration at levels which concerned them most.

Another very significant difference between North and

South India lay in the position enjoyed by the temples. In South India the temple was a central institution round which the entire life of the community revolved. The temple trustees were not only responsible for the administration of the temple, but as the temple generally owned extensive lands they also often exercised powers of local government including administration of justice. We have much inscriptional evidence of the great and dominant role that temples played in the life of South India. Till quite recent times this used to be the case, and even today major temples like those at Madurai, Chidambaram, Srirangam and Tirupathi play a role in the social life of the area for which there is no parallel in the North. The more important villages in South India were built around temples. The temples not merely provided for religious life but were the centres of the social, economic and artistic life of the area. Being wealthy, and enjoying unique social influence and integrated with the life of the people, the temples were able not merely to act as centres of social and economic life but also to provide relief in times of famine, encourage artistic talent, provide a forum for public discussion and generally to constitute themselves into centres of active corporate life.

Apart from the village and district councils and the temple committees, there were in existence powerful independent corporations representing varied interests which were guardians of public welfare and frequently did not hesitate to organise resistance to oppressive measures of government. The famous trade organisations, Edangai and Valangai—the left hand and right hand—for example, organised in 1429 a movement for resisting what they considered to be illegal imposts in a district. Again, at Vriddhachalam in South Arcot, the two organisations, after declaring that the officers of the king and the concessionnaire oppressed the people, decided that members of the Edangai and the Valangai corporations should not give them shelter, write accounts for them or agree to their proposals and if any one proved a traitor, he should be severely dealt with. We have another instance, again, of the Edangai and the Valangai fighting for the rights of the people. Protesting against excessive taxa-

tion the two corporations at a general meeting decided as follows: 'Because they did not tax us according to the yield of the crops but levied taxes unjustly....we were about to run away.' Then we realised that we were dealt with unjustly because we were not united. Hereafter we shall only pay what is just and in accordance with the yield of the crops and we shall not pay anything levied unlawfully.' It will be seen that these powerful organisations, like the municipal corporations of the middle age in Europe, were staunch champions of popular rights and effectively resisted the encroachment on the rights of the people by the king's government as well as by the nobles.

Another and perhaps more vital difference between the North and the South related to the part played by commercial organisations. The trade and economic life of Hindustan were dependent upon land routes and upon caravans, which may be described as Sarthavaha trade. The Sarthavaha was the leader who organised the movement of merchants, looked after their protection and arranged for their transport. In the South, on the other hand, trade was mainly maritime and consequently its structure was different. It was controlled by elaborate and powerful bodies like the *Nanadesis,* the Edangai and the Valangai corporations, the Manigram guilds and other well-known organisations. They were the leaders of Indian cultural and commercial expansion in South-East Asia and the Archipelago. This fact is borne out by many inscriptions. An inscription at Taikopa in Malaya places a Vishnu temple under the authority of the Manigramam corporation of the area. A royal grant invests the same corporation with extraordinary powers similar to those enjoyed by chartered companies in the period of European expansion. Of the corporation of *Nanadesis,* a Mysore inscription speaks thus: 'Brave men born to wander over many countries, penetrating lands of the six continents by land and water routes and dealing in various articles such as horses, elephants, precious stones, perfumes and drugs, either wholesale or in retail.'

These powerful commercial corporations enjoying special rights at home and carrying on extensive trading operations

abroad formed a characteristic of South Indian polity at all times. The vast commercial interests which in our own day the descendants of these adventurous spirits controlled in Indo-China, Siam, the Malaya peninsula and Burma should help to show how deep-rooted this tradition is in South Indian life.

It may be stated briefly that, while the social and political conceptions of the South did not differ basically from those of the North, the conditions under which they evolved led to a difference in development which became marked as time passed. The external pressures to which the kingdoms of the Gangetic plain were subjected led to the development of an autocratic monarchical power, and to the gradual weakening of popular and local government institutions which perhaps existed in an earlier period under such tribal communities as the Lichchavis and the Mallas. In South India, on the other hand, the absence of the foreign pressure led to a greater integration of society, the stabilisation of social life and the consequent growth of institutions of a local and regional character enabling the people to participate effectively in the management of their own affairs. Finally, there was also the great influence of maritime trade and overseas interests which led to the growth of great corporations which influenced the social life of the community and provided public life with a power of resistance to autocratic rule.